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John Wilmot. Earl of
ROCHESTER.
Born 1648. Died 1680.

Publish'd by W. Baynes, Junr. 1805.

54

SOME PASSAGES

IN THE LIFE AND DEATH

OF

JOHN EARL OF ROCHESTER,

WRITTEN BY

GILBERT BURNET, D. D.

Bishop of Salisbury:

WITH

A Sermon,

25388

PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL OF THE SAID EARL,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT PARSONS, A. M.

To which are prefixed,

TWO CRITICISMS ON THE WRITINGS OF THE EARL OF ROCHESTER,

BY

THE HONOURABLE HORACE WALPOLE,

AND

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

London:

Printed by George Smallfield, Hackney:

FOR W. BAYNES AND SON, 23 AND 54 PATERNOSTER ROW,

1820.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

BISHOP BURNET'S Narrative of the most remarkable Passages in the Life of the celebrated John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, has ever been greatly valued, not only as an elegant composition, but as a lesson of instruction to mankind.

A young nobleman conversant in a most licentious court, whence regularity of behaviour and sound morality were banished for the more tempting allurements of vicious pleasures and sensual gratifications, was unhappily drawn into the commission of the most unjustifiable and profligate actions. A fit of sickness roused him into a sense of his abandoned course of life: he called for the assistance of an eminent divine, to whom he trusted his most secret actions; and, with all the candour of conviction, and the sincerity of penitence, earnestly requested him, on his death-bed, to communicate them freely and undisguised to the world. Burnet has faithfully fulfilled the intentions of his penitent; but at the same time, has related the best as well as the worst part of Lord Rochester's life.

The very high encomium bestowed upon this book by Dr. Samuel Johnson, in his Lives of the English Poets, has induced the bookseller to reprint it, with the addition of the same great author's Account of the Life and Writings of the Earl of Rochester; as well as another by the late Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford.

The following Letter, preserved among the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum, may be considered as an additional Evidence of Lord Rochester's sincere Repentance.

"When Wilmot Lord Rochester lay on his deathbed, Mr. Fanshaw came to visit him, with an intention to stay about a week with him. Mr. Fanshaw, sitting by the bedside, perceived his lordship praying to God through JESUS CHRIST; and acquainted Dr. Radcliffe (who attended my Lord Rochester in this illness, and was then in the house) with what he had heard; and told him that my lord was certainly delirious, for to his knowledge (he said) he believed neither in God nor Jesus Christ. The doctor (who had often heard him pray in the same manner) proposed to Mr. Fanshaw to go up to his lordship, to be further satisfied touching this affair. When they came to his room the doctor told my lord what Mr. Fanshaw said; upon which his lordship addressed himself to Mr. Fanshaw to this effect:—'Sir, it is true you and I have been very lewd and profane together, and then I was of the opinion you mention; but now I am quite of another mind, and happy am I that I am so. I am very sensible how miserable I was whilst of another opinion. Sir, you may assure yourself that there is a Judge and a future state;' and so entered into a very handsome discourse concerning the last judgment, future state, &c., and

concluded with a serious and pathetic exhortation to Mr. Fanshaw to enter into another course of life; adding, that he (Mr. Fanshaw) knew him to be his friend; that he never was more so than at this time: 'And, Sir, (said he,) to use a Scripture expression, I am not mad, but speak the words of truth and soberness.' Upon this Mr. Fanshaw trembled, and went immediately afoot to Woodstock, and there hired a horse to Oxford, and thence took coach to London. At the same time Dr. Shorter (who also attended my lord in this illness) and Dr. Radcliffe walking together in the park, and discoursing touching his lordship's condition, which they agreed to be past remedy, Dr. Shorter, fetching a very deep sigh, said; 'Well, I can do him no good, but he has done me a great deal.' When Dr. Radcliffe came to reside in London, he made inquiry about Dr. Shorter, and understood he was before that time a libertine in principle, but after that professed the Roman Catholic religion.

"I heard Dr. Radcliffe give this account at my Lord Oxford's table, (then Speaker of the House of Commons,) June 16, 1702. Present, (besides Mr. Speaker,) Lord Weymouth, Mr. Bromley of Warwickshire, Mr. William Harvey, Mr. Pendarvis, Mr. Henry St. John: and I wrote it down immediately.

"WILLIAM THOMAS."

An Account, by the Honourable Horace Walpole, of the Writings of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester.

A MAN whom the Muses were fond to inspire, but ashamed to avow; and who practised, without the least reserve, that secret, which can make verses more read for their defects, than for their merits; an art neither commendable nor difficult. Moralists proclaim loudly, that there is no wit in indecency. 'Tis very true, indecency is far from conferring wit; but it does not altogether destroy it. Lord Rochester's Poems have much more obscenity than wit; more wit than poetry; more poetry than politeness. One is amazed at hearing the age of Charles the Second called polite: because the Presbyterians and religionists had affected to call every thing by a Scripture name, the court affected also to call every thing by its own name. That court had no pretensions to politeness, but by a resemblance to the age of Aristophanes, which called its own grossness polite. Would a Scythian have been civilized by the Athenian stage; or a Hottentot by the drawing-room of Charles the Second? The characters and anecdotes being forgot, the state poems of that time are a heap of senseless ribaldry; scarcely in rhyme, and more seldom in metre. When Satyrs were brought to court, no wonder the Graces would not trust themselves there. The writings of this "noble and beautiful Count," as Antony Wood calls him, (for his lordship's vices were among the fruits of the

Restoration, and consequently not unlovely in that biographer's eyes,) in the order they were published, at least as they are ranged by that author, were, 1st. "A Satire against Mankind;" printed in one sheet, folio, June 1679: it is more than an imitation of Boileau. One Griffith, a minister, wrote against it. Andrew Marvell used to say, "Rochester was the only man in England who had the true vein of satire;" a very wrong judgment: indelicacy does not spoil flattery more than it does satire. 2d. "On Nothing," a poem printed on one side of a sheet of paper in two columns. The witty George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, was said to have assisted in the composition of this last-mentioned poem. 3d. "Poems on several Occasions:" Antwerp, [London,] 1680, 8vo. Among his Poems are some by other hands, falsely imputed to him. "The Ramble in St. James's Park," was claimed by Alexander Ratchliffe of Gray's Inn. It seems his lordship, when dying, had ordered all his immoral writings to be burned. But the age was not without its Curls to preserve such treasures. 4th. "A Letter on his Death-bed to Dr. Burnet:" London, 1680; one sheet, folio. 5th. "Valentinian; a Tragedy of John Fletcher, as it is altered by the late Earl of Rochester," and acted at the theatre Royal in Drury Lane: London, 1685; 4to. There is a large preface and encomium on the author and his writings, by Mr. Wolsely. 6th. "Poems on several Occasions; with Valentinian, a Tragedy:" London, 1691, 8vo. To this edition are prefixed "Poems on the Death of the Earl, &c."

Under the Earl's name are printed several pieces in "A Collection of Poems, by several Hands:" London, 1693, 8vo.; as also, "A Translation from Horace in Examen Poeticum, the Third part of Miscellany Poems;" and "A Song in imitation of Sir John Eaton's Song," in the same work: London, 1693. And in the "Annual Miscellany, for the Year 1694, being the Fourth Part of Miscellany Poems," London, 8vo., are ascribed to Lord Rochester, "A Lyric imitated from Cornelius Gallus;" "Apollo's Grief for having killed Hyacinth by Accident, in Imitation of Ovid;" and "A Song."

"A Lampoon on Lord Mulgrave," said to be in Mr. Sheldon's library, MS. "On the supposed Author of a late Poem in Defence of Satire,* with Rochester's Answer," MSS.

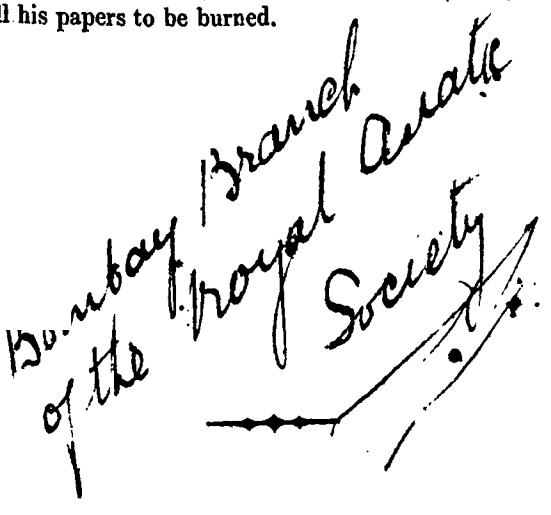
"The Works of the Earls of Rochester, Roscommon, Dorset, &c." two volumes in one; London, 1718; printed by Curl, though without any name.

"Fifty-four Letters to Henry Saville and others," in the second volume of a Collection of Letters published for Dodsley, London, 1755, 8vo.

"Seven Letters to his Wife and Son," in the second volume of Whartoniana: "Another Letter" in the Literary Magazine for January 1758; and "Two Others" in the Harleian Collection, No. 7003.

* This Poem, with another by the same author, seems to have been printed in a volume entitled "A Collection of Poems by the Marquis of Normanby, Lord Halifax, Sir Robert Howard, the Earl of Rochester, &c. &c." London, 1702.

Lord Rochester left, besides, with several other papers, as the great Lord Bolingbroke has said, "A History of the Intrigues of the Court of Charles the Second, in a Series of Letters to his Friend Henry Saville;" but upon the Earl's death, his mother, a very devout lady of the family of St. John, ordered all his papers to be burned.



The following Account of the Earl of Rochester's Life and Writings is abstracted from Dr. Johnson's Preface to the Poetical Works of that Nobleman.

JOHN WILMOT, afterwards Earl of Rochester, the son of Henry, Earl of Rochester, better known by the title of Lord Wilmot, so often mentioned in Clarendon's History, was born April 10, 1647, at Ditchley, in Oxfordshire. After a grammatical education at the school of Burford, he entered a nobleman into Wadham College in 1659, only twelve years old; and in 1661, at fourteen, was, with some other persons of high rank, made Master of Arts by Lord Clarendon in person. He travelled afterwards into France and Italy, and at his return devoted himself to the court. In 1665 he went to sea with Sandwich, and distinguished himself at Bergen by uncommon intrepidity; and the next summer served again on board Sir Edward Spragge, who, in the heat of the engagement, having a message of reproof to send to one of his captains, could find no man ready to carry it but Wilmot, who in an open boat went and returned amidst the storm of shot. But his reputation for bravery was not lasting: he was reproached with slinking away in street quarrels, and leaving his companions to shift as they could without him; and Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, has left a story of his refusal to fight him.

He had very early an inclination to intemperance, which he totally subdued in his travels; but, when he

became a courtier, unhappily addicted himself to dissolute and vicious company, by which his principles were corrupted and his manners depraved. He lost all sense of religious restraint; and finding it not convenient to admit the authority of laws which he was resolved not to obey, sheltered his wickedness behind infidelity. As he excelled in that noisy and licentious merriment which wine incites, his companions eagerly encouraged him in excess, and he willingly indulged it; till, as he confessed to Dr. Burnet, he was for five years together continually drunk, or so much inflamed by frequent ebriety, as in no instance to be master of himself. In this state he played many frolics, which it is not for his honour that we should remember, and which are not now distinctly known. He often pursued low amours in mean disguises, and always acted with great exactness and dexterity the characters which he assumed. He once erected a stage on Tower Hill, and harangued the populace as a mountebank; and, having made physic part of his study, is said to have practised it successfully.

He was so much in favour with King Charles, that he was made one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, and comptroller of Woodstock Park.

Having an active and inquisitive mind, he never, except in his paroxysms of intemperance, was wholly negligent of study: he read what is considered as polite learning so much, that he is mentioned by Wood as the greatest scholar of all the nobility. Sometimes he retired into the country, and amused himself with writing libels, in which he did not pre-

tend to confine himself to truth. His favourite author in French, was Boileau; and in English, Cowley.

Thus in a course of drunken gaiety and gross sensuality, with intervals of study perhaps yet more criminal, with an avowed contempt of all decency and order, a total disregard to every moral, and a resolute denial of every religious obligation; he lived worthless and useless, and blazed out his youth and his health in lavish voluptuousness; till, at the age of one-and-thirty, he had exhausted the fund of life, and reduced himself to a state of weakness and decay. At this time he was led to an acquaintance with Dr. Burnet, to whom he laid open, with great freedom, the tenour of his opinions, and the course of his life and from whom he received such conviction of the reasonableness of moral duty, and the truth of Christianity, as produced a total change both of his manners and opinions. The account of those salutary conferences is given by Burnet, in a book entitled, *Some Passages of the Life and Death of John Earl of Rochester*; which the critic ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety. It were an injury to the reader to offer him an abridgment. He died July 26, 1680, before he had completed his thirty-fourth year; and was so worn away by a long illness, that life went out without a struggle.

Lord Rochester was eminent for the vigour of his colloquial wit, and remarkable for many wild pranks and sallies of extravagance. The glare of his general character diffused itself upon his writings: the com-

positions of a man whose name was heard so often were certain of attention; and, from many readers, certain of applause. This blaze of reputation is not yet quite extinguished; and his poetry still retains some splendour beyond that which genius has bestowed. Wood and Burnet give us reason to believe that much was imputed to him which he did not write. I know not by whom the original collection was made, or by what authority its genuineness was ascertained. The first edition was published in the year of his death, with an air of concealment professing in the title page to be printed at *Antwerp*. Of some of the pieces, however, there is no doubt. The imitation of Horace's Satire, the Verses to Lord Mulgrave, the Satire against Man, the Verses upon *Nothing*, and perhaps some others, are, I believe, genuine; and perhaps most of those which the late collection exhibits.

As he cannot be supposed to have found leisure for any course of continued study, his pieces are commonly short, such as one fit of resolution would produce. His songs have no particular character: they tell, like other songs in smooth and easy language, of scorn and kindness, dismission and desertion, absence and inconstancy, with the common-places of artificial courtship. They are commonly smooth and easy; but have little nature and little sentiment. His imitation of Horace on Lucilius is not inelegant or unhappy. In the reign of Charles the Second began that adaptation, which has since been very frequent, of ancient poetry to present times, and perhaps few

will be found where the parallelism is better preserved than in this. The versification is, indeed, sometimes careless, but it is sometimes vigorous and weighty.

The strongest effort of his Muse is his poem upon *Nothing*. He is not the first who has chosen this barren subject for the boast of his fertility. There is a poem called *Nihil* in Latin by *Passerat*, a poet and critic of the sixteenth century in France, who in his own epitaph, expresses his zeal for good poetry thus:

——Molliter ossa quiescent,
Sint modo carminibus non onerata malis.

In examining this performance, *Nothing* must be considered as having not only a negative but a kind of positive signification: as, I need not fear thieves, I have *nothing*; and *nothing* is a very powerful protector. In the first part of the sentence it is taken negatively; in the second it is taken positively, as an agent. In one of Boileau's lines it was a question—whether he should use *à rien faire*, or *à ne rien faire*; and the first was preferred, because it gave *rien* a sense in some sort positive. *Nothing* can be a subject only in its positive sense, and such a sense is given it in the first line:

Nothing, thou elder brother e'en to shade.

In this line, I know not whether he does not allude to a curious book *de Umbra*, by Wowerus, which, having told the qualities of *Shade*, concludes with a poem, in which are these lines:

Jam primum terram validis circumspice claustris
Suspensam totam, decus admirabile mundi
Terrasque tractusque maris, camposque liquentes
Aeris et vasti laqueata palatia cœli—
Omnibus UMBRA prior.

The positive sense is generally preserved, with great skill, through the whole poem: though sometimes, in a subordinate sense, the negative *nothing* is injudiciously mingled. Passerat confounds the two senses.

Another of his most vigorous pieces is his Lampoon on Sir Car Scroop, who, in a poem called *The Praise of Satire*, had some lines like these, which I quote from memory:

He who can push into a midnight fray
His brave companion;* and then run away,
Leaving him to be murder'd in the street,
Then put it off with some buffoon conceit;
Him, thus dishonour'd, for a wit you own,
And court him as top fiddler of the town.

This was meant of Rochester, whose *buffoon conceit* was, I suppose, a saying often mentioned, that *every man would be a coward if he durst*; and drew from him those furious verses, to which Scroop made, in reply, an epigram ending with these lines:

Thou canst hurt no man's fame with thy ill word;
Thy pen is full as harmless as thy sword.

* Colonel Downs.

Of the satire against *Man*, Rochester can only claim what remains when all Boileau's part is taken away.

In all his works there is sprightliness and vigour, and every where may be found tokens of a mind which study might have carried to excellence. What more can be expected from a life spent in ostentatious contempt of regularity, and ended before the abilities of many other men began to be displayed?

THE PREFACE.

THE celebrating the praises of the dead is an argument so worn out by long and frequent use, and now become so nauseous by the flattery that usually attends it, that it is no wonder if funeral orations, or panegyrics, are more considered for the elegance of style and fineness of wit, than for the authority they carry with them as to the truth of matters of fact. And yet I am not hereby deterred from meddling with this kind of argument, nor from handling it with all the plainness I can; delivering only what I myself heard and saw, without any borrowed ornament. I do easily foresee how many will be engaged for the support of their impious maxims and immoral practices, to disparage what I am to write. Others will censure it because it comes from one of my profession; too many supposing us to be induced to frame such discourses for carrying on what they are pleased to call *our trade*. Some will think I dress it up too artificially; and others, that I present it too plain and naked.

But, being resolved to govern myself by the exact rules of truth, I shall be less concerned in the censures I may fall under. It may seem liable to great exception that I should disclose so many things

that were discovered to me, if not under the seal of confession, yet under the confidence of friendship. But this noble lord himself not only released me from all obligation of this kind, when I waited on him in his last sickness a few days before he died, but gave it me in charge not to spare him in any thing which I thought might be of use to the living, and was not ill pleased to be laid open, as well in the worst as in the best and last part of his life, being so sincere in his repentance, that he was not unwilling to take shame to himself, by suffering his faults to be exposed for the benefit of others.

I write with one great disadvantage, that I cannot reach his chief design without mentioning some of his faults; but I have touched them as tenderly as occasion would bear, and, I am sure, with much more softness than he desired, or would have consented unto, had I told him how I intended to manage this part. I have related nothing with personal reflections on any others concerned with him; wishing rather that they themselves, reflecting on the sense he had of his former disorders, may be thereby led to forsake their own, than that they should be any ways reproached by what I write; and therefore, though he used very few reserves with me as to his course of life, yet, since others had a share in most parts of it, I shall relate nothing but what more immediately concerned himself; and I shall say no more of his faults than is necessary to illustrate his repentance.

The occasion that led me into so particular a knowledge of him, was an intimation, given me by a

gentleman of his acquaintance, of his desire to see me. This was some time in October, 1679, when he was slowly recovering out of a great disease. He had understood that I often attended on one well known to him, that died the summer before: he was also then entertaining himself, in that state of his health, with the first part of the *History of the Reformation*, then newly come out, with which he seemed not ill pleased: and we had accidentally met in two or three places some time before. These were the motives that led him to call for my company. After I had waited on him once or twice, he grew into that freedom with me, as to open to me all his thoughts, both of religion and morality, and to give me a full view of his past life, and seemed not uneasy at my frequent visits. So, till he went from London, which was in the beginning of April, I waited on him often. As soon as I heard how ill he was, and how much he was touched with a sense of his former life, I writ to him, and received from him an answer, that, without my knowledge, was printed since his death, from a copy which one of his servants conveyed to the press. In it there is so undeserved a value put on me, that it had been very indecent for me to have published it: yet that must be attributed to his civility and way of breeding; and indeed he was particularly known to so few of the clergy, that the good opinion he had of me is to be imputed only to his unacquaintance with others.

My end in writing is so to discharge the last commands this lord left on me, as that it may be effectual

to awaken those who run on to all the excesses of riot; and that, in the midst of those heats which their lusts and passions raise in them, they may be a little wrought on by so great an instance of one who had run round the whole circle of *luxury*; and, as Solomon says of himself, *Whatsoever his eyes desired, he kept it not from them; and withheld his heart from no joy.* But when he looked back on all that on which he had wasted his time and his strength, he esteemed it *vanity and vexation of spirit:* though he had both as much natural wit, and as much acquired by learning, and both as much improved with thinking and study, as perhaps any libertine of the age: yet, when he reflected on all his former courses even before his mind was illuminated with better thoughts, he counted them madness and folly. But when the powers of religion came to operate on him, then he added a detestation to the contempt he formerly had of them, suitable to what became a sincere penitent; and expressed himself in so clear and so calm a manner, so sensible of his failings towards his Maker and Redeemer, that, as it wrought not a little on those that were about him, so, I hope, the making it public may have a more general influence, chiefly on those on whom his former conversation might have had ill effects.

I have endeavoured to give his character as fully as I could take it: for, I who saw him only in one light, in a sedate and quiet temper, when he was under a great decay of strength and loss of spirits, cannot give his picture with that life and advantage that others may

who knew him when his parts were more bright and lively; yet the composure he was then in may perhaps be supposed to balance any abatement of his usual vigour, which the declination of his health brought him under. I have written this discourse with as much care, and have considered it as narrowly as I could. I am sure I have said nothing but truth; I have done it slowly, and often used my second thoughts in it, not being so much concerned in the censures which might fall on myself, as cautious that nothing should pass that might obstruct my only design of writing, which is the doing what I can towards the reforming a loose and lewd age. And if such a signal instance, concurring with all the evidence that we have for our most holy faith, has no effect on those who are running the same course, it is much to be feared they are given up to a reprobate sense.

SOME PASSAGES

IN

THE LIFE AND DEATH

OF

JOHN EARL OF ROCHESTER.

JOHN WILMOT, Earl of Rochester, was born in April, Anno Domini 1648. His father was Henry Earl of Rochester, but best known by the title of the Lord Wilmot, who bore so great a part in all the late wars, that mention is often made of him in the history, and had the chief share in the honour of the preservation of his Majesty after Worcester fight, and the conveying him from place to place till he happily escaped into France; but dying before the King's return, he left his son little other inheritance but the honour and title derived to him, with the pretensions such eminent services gave him to the King's favour; these were carefully managed by the great prudence and discretion of his mother, a daughter of that noble and ancient family of the St. Johns, of Wiltshire; so that his education was carried on in all things suitably to his quality.

When he was at school, he was an extraordinary proficient at his book; and those shining parts,

which since have appeared with so much lustre, began then to shew themselves. He acquired the Latin to such perfection, that to his dying day he retained a great relish of the fineness and beauty of that tongue, and was exactly versed in the incomparable authors that wrote about Augustus's time, whom he read often with that peculiar delight which the greatest wits have ever found in those studies.

When he went to the university, the general joy which over-ran the whole nation upon his Majesty's restoration, but was not regulated with that sobriety and temperance that became a serious gratitude to God for so great a blessing, produced some of its ill effects upon him: he began to love these disorders too much. His tutor was that eminent and pious divine, Dr. Blandford, afterwards promoted to the sees of Oxford and Worcester; and, under his inspection, he was committed to the more immediate care of Mr. Phineas Berry, a fellow of Wadham College, a very learned and good-natured man, whom he afterwards ever used with much respect, and rewarded him as became a great man. But the humour of that time wrought so much on him, that he broke off the course of his studies, to which no means could ever effectually recall him, till, when he was in Italy, his governor, Dr. Balfour, a learned and worthy man, afterwards a celebrated physician in Scotland, his native country, drew him to read such books as were most likely to bring him back to love learning and study: and he often acknowledged to me, in particular three days before his death, how

much he was obliged to love and honour this his governor, to whom he thought he owed more than to all the world, next after his parents, for his great fidelity and care of him while he was under his trust. But no part of it affected him more sensibly than that he engaged him by many tricks (so he expressed it) to delight in books and reading; so that ever after he took occasion, in the intervals of those woful extravagancies that consumed most of his time, to read much; and, though the time was generally but indifferently employed, for the choice of the subjects of his studies was not always good, yet the habitual love of knowledge, together with these fits of study, had much awakened his understanding, and prepared him for better things, when his mind should be so far changed as to relish them.

He came from his travels in the eighteenth year of his age, and appeared at court with as great advantages as most ever had. He was a graceful and well-shaped person, tall, and well made, if not a little too slender: he was exactly well bred; and, what by a modest behaviour natural to him, what by a civility become almost as natural, his conversation was easy and obliging. He had a strange vivacity of thought and vigour of expression; his wit had a subtilty and sublimity both, that it was scarce imitable. His style was clear and strong: when he used figures, they were lively, and yet far enough out of the common road. He had made himself master of the ancient and modern wit, and of the modern French and Italian as well as the English. He loved to talk and

write of speculative matters; and did it with so fine a thread, that even those who hated the subjects that his fancy ran upon, yet could not but be charmed with his way of treating them. Boileau among the French, and Cowley among the English, wits, were those he admired most. Sometimes other men's thoughts mixed with his composures; but that flowed rather from the impresssions they made on him when he read them, by which they came to return on him as his own thoughts, than that he servilely copied from any; for few men had a bolder flight of fancy, more steadily governed by judgment, than he had. No wonder a young man so made and so improved was very acceptable in a court.

Soon after his coming thither, he laid hold on the first occasion that offered to shew his readiness to hazard his life in the defence and service of his country. In winter, 1665, he went with the Earl of Sandwich to sea, when he was sent to lie for a Dutch East-India fleet; and was in the Revenge, commanded by Sir Thomas Tiddiman, when the attack was made on the port of Bergen in Norway, the Dutch ships having got into that port. It was as desperate an attempt as ever was made. During the whole action the Earl of Rochester shewed as brave and as resolute a courage as was possible: a person of honour told me he heard the Lord Clifford, who was in the same ship, often magnify his courage at that time very highly. Nor did the rigours of the season, the hardness of the voyage, and the extreme danger he had been in, deter him from running the like on the very next occasion;

for the summer following he went to sea again, without communicating his design to his nearest relations. He went on board the ship commanded by Sir Edward Spragge, the day before the great sea-fight of that year.—Almost all the volunteers that were in the same ship were killed. Mr. Middleton (brother to Sir Hugh Middleton) was shot in the arm.—During the action, Sir Edward Spragge, not being satisfied with the behaviour of one of his captains, could not easily find a person that would cheerfully venture through so much danger to carry his commands to that captain. This lord offered himself to the service, and went in a little boat, through all the shot, and delivered his message, and returned back to Sir Edward; which was much commended by all that saw it. He thought it necessary to begin his life with these demonstrations of courage, in an element and way of fighting which is acknowledged to be the greatest trial of clear and undaunted valour.

He had so entirely laid down the intemperance that was growing on him before his travels, that at his return he hated nothing more; but, falling into company that loved these excesses, he was, though not without difficulty, and by many steps, brought back to it again; and the natural heat of his fancy, being inflamed by wine, made him so extravagantly pleasant, that many, to be more diverted by that humour, studied to engage him deeper and deeper in intemperance; which at length did so entirely subdue him, that, as he told me, for five years together he was continually drunk; not all the while under the

visible effects of it, but his blood was so inflamed, that he was not, in all that time, cool enough to be perfectly master of himself. This led him to say and do many wild and unaccountable things: by this, he said, he had broken the firm constitution of his health that seemed so strong, that nothing was too hard for it; and he had suffered so much in his reputation, that he almost despaired to recover it. There were two principles in his natural temper, that, being heightened by that heat, carried him to great excesses —a violent love of pleasure, and a disposition to extravagant mirth. The one involved him in great sensuality; the other led him to many odd adventures and frolics, in which he was oft in hazard of his life: the one being the same irregular appetite in his mind that the other was in his body, which led him to think nothing diverting that was not extravagant. And though, in cold blood, he was a generous and good-natured man, yet he would go far, in his heats, after any thing that might turn to a jest or matter of diversion. He said to me, he never improved his interest at court to do a premeditated mischief to other persons. Yet he laid out his wit very freely in libels and satires, in which he had a peculiar talent of mixing his wit with his malice, and fitting both with such apt words, that men were tempted to be pleased with them: from thence his composures came to be easily known, for few had such a way of tempering these together as he had; so that, when any thing extraordinary that way came out, as a child is fathered sometimes by its resem-

blance, so it was laid at his door as its parent and author.

These exercises in the course of his life were not always equally pleasant to him: he had often sad intervals and severe reflections on them: and, though then he had not these awakened in him by any deep principle of religion, yet the horror that nature raised in him, especially in some sicknesses, made him too easy to receive some ill principles which others endeavoured to possess him with; so that he was too soon brought to set himself to secure and fortify his mind against that, by dispossessing it all he could of the belief or apprehensions of religion. The licentiousness of his temper, with the briskness of his wit, disposed him to love the conversation of those who divided their time between lewd actions and irregular mirth. And so he came to bend his wit, and direct his studies and endeavours, to support and strengthen these ill principles in himself and others.

An accident fell out after this which confirmed him more in these courses. When he went to sea in the year 1665, there happened to be, in the same ship with him, Mr. Montague and another gentleman of quality. These two, the former especially, seemed persuaded that they should never return into England; Mr. Montague said he was sure of it; the other was not so positive. The Earl of Rochester and the last of these entered into a formal engagement, not without ceremonies of religion, that, if either of them died, he should appear, and give the other notice of the future state, if there was any; but Mr. Montague

would not enter into the bond. When the day came that they thought to have taken the Dutch fleet, in the port of Bergen, Mr. Montague, though he had such a strong presage in his mind of his approaching death, yet he generously staid all the while in the place of greatest danger. The other gentleman signalized his courage in a most undaunted manner till the end of the action, when he fell on a sudden into such a trembling that he could scarce stand; and Mr. Montague going to him to hold him up, as they were in each other's arms, a cannon ball killed him outright, and carried away Mr. Montague's belly, so that he died within an hour after. The Earl of Rochester told me that these presages they had in their minds made some impression on him, that there were separated beings; and that the soul, either by a natural sagacity, or some secret notice communicated to it, had a sort of divination. But that gentleman's never appearing was a great snare to him during the rest of his life; though when he told me this, he could not but acknowledge it was an unreasonable thing for him to think, that beings in another state are not under such laws and limits that they could not command their own motions but as the Supreme Power should order them; and that one, who had so corrupted the natural principles of truth as he had, had no reason to expect that such an extraordinary thing should be done for his conviction.

He told me of another odd presage that one had of his approaching death in the Lady Warre's, his mother-in-law's, house. The chaplain had dreamt

that such a day he should die; but, being by all the family put out of the belief of it, he had almost forgot it; till, the evening before, at supper, there being thirteen at table, according to a fond conceit that one of these must soon die, one of the young ladies pointed to him that he was to die. He, remembering his dream, fell into some disorder; and, the Lady Warre reproving him for his superstition, he said he was confident he was to die before morning; but he being in perfect health, it was not much minded. It was Saturday night, and he was to preach next day. He went to his chamber, and sat up late, as appeared by the burning of his candle; and he had been preparing his notes for his sermon; but was found dead in his bed the next morning. These things, he said, made him inclined to believe the soul was a substance distinct from matter; and this often returned into his thoughts. But that which perfected his persuasion about it was, that, in the sickness which brought him so near death before I first knew him, when his spirits were so low and spent that he could not move nor stir, and he did not think to live an hour, he said his reason and judgment were so clear and strong, that from thence he was fully persuaded that death was not the spending or dissolution of the soul, but only the separation of it from matter. He had in that sickness great remorses for his past life; but he afterwards told me, they were rather general and dark horrors, than any conviction of sinning against God. He was sorry he had lived so as to waste his strength so soon, or that he had brought such an ill-

name upon himself; and had an agony in his mind about it which he knew not well how to express; but at such times, though he complied with his friends in suffering divines to be sent for, he said he had no great mind to it, and that it was but a piece of his breeding to desire them to pray by him, in which he joined little himself.

As to the Supreme Being, he had always some impression of one; and professed often to me, that he had never known an entire Atheist, who fully believed there was no God. Yet, when he explained his notion of this Being, it amounted to no more than a vast power, that had none of the attributes of goodness or justice we ascribe to the Deity. These were his thoughts about religion, as he himself told me. For morality, he freely owned to me, that, though he talked of it as a fine thing, yet this was only because he thought it a decent mode of speaking; and that, as they went always in clothes, though in their frolics they would have chosen sometimes to have gone naked, if they had not feared the people,—so some of them found it necessary, for human life, to talk of morality, yet he confessed they cared not for it, farther than the reputation of it was necessary for their credit and affairs; of which he gave me many instances: as their professing and swearing friendship where they hated mortally; their oaths and imprecations on their addresses to women, which they intended never to make good; the pleasure they took in defaming innocent persons, and spreading false reports of some, perhaps in revenge, because

they could not engage them to comply with their ill-designs; the delight they had in making people quarrel; their unjust usage of their creditors, and putting them off by any deceitful promise they could invent that might deliver them from present importunity. So that, in detestation of these courses, he would often break forth into such hard expressions, concerning himself, as would be indecent for another to repeat.

Such had been his principles and practices in a course of many years, which had almost quite extinguished the natural propensities in him to justice and virtue. He would often go into the country, and be for some months wholly employed in study, or the sallies of his wit, which he came to direct chiefly to satire. And this he often defended to me, by saying there were some people that could not be kept in order or admonished but in this way. I replied, that it might be granted that a grave way of satire was sometimes no unprofitable way of reproof; yet they who used it only out of spite, and mixed lies with truth, sparing nothing that might adorn their poems or gratify their revenge, could not excuse that way of reproach by which the innocent often suffer; since the most malicious things, if wittily expressed, might stick to and blemish the best men in the world; and the malice of a libel could hardly consist with the charity of an admonition. To this he answered, a man could not write with life unless he were heated by revenge; for, to write a satire without resentments, upon the cold

notions of philosophy, was as if a man would in cold blood cut men's throats who had never offended him; and he said the lies in these libels came often in as ornaments that could not be spared without spoiling the beauty of the poem.

For his other studies, they were divided between the comical and witty writings of the ancients and moderns, the Roman authors, and books of physic; which the ill state of health he was fallen into made more necessary to himself, and which qualified him for an odd adventure which I shall but just mention. Being under an unlucky accident, which obliged him to keep out of the way, he disguised himself so that his nearest friends could not have known him, and set up, in Tower Street, for an Italian mountebank, where he practised physic for some weeks not without success. In his latter years he read books of history more. He took pleasure to disguise himself as a porter, or as a beggar; sometimes to follow some mean amours, which for the variety of them he affected. At other times, merely for diversion, he would go about in odd shapes, in which he acted his part so naturally, that even those who were in the secret, and saw him in these shapes, could perceive nothing by which he might be discovered.

I have now made the description of his former life and principles as fully as I thought necessary, to answer my end in writing, and yet with those reserves that I hope I have given no just cause of offence to any. I have said nothing but what I had from his own mouth, and have avoided the mention-

ing of the more particular passages of his life, of which he told me not a few: but since others were concerned in them, whose good only I design, I will say nothing that may either provoke or blemish them. It is their reformation, not their disgrace, I desire. This tender consideration of others has made me suppress many remarkable and useful things he told me; but, finding that, though I should name none, yet I must at least relate such circumstances as would give too great occasion for the reader to conjecture concerning the persons intended, right or wrong, either of which were inconvenient enough, I have chosen to pass them quite over. But I hope those that know how much they were engaged with him in his ill courses, will be somewhat touched with this tenderness I express towards them, and be thereby the rather induced to reflect on their ways, and to consider, without prejudice or passion, what a sense this noble lord had of their case, when he came at last seriously to reflect upon his own.

I now turn to those parts of this narrative wherein I myself bore some share, and which I am to deliver upon the observations I made after a long and free conversation with him for some months. I was not long in his company, when he told me he should treat me with more freedom than he had ever used to men of my profession; he would conceal none of his principles from me, but lay his thoughts open without any disguise; nor would he do it to maintain debate, or shew his wit, but plainly tell me what stuck with him; and protested to me, that he was

not so engaged to his old maxims as to resolve not to change, but that, if he could be convinced, he would choose rather to be of another mind. He said he would impartially weigh what I should lay before him, and tell me freely when it did convince and when it did not. He expressed this disposition of mind to me in a manner so frank, that I could not but believe him, and be much taken with his way of discourse: so we entered into almost all the parts of natural and revealed religion, and of morality. He seemed pleased, and in a great measure satisfied, with what I said upon many of these heads; and, though our freest conversation was when we were alone, yet upon several occasions other persons were witnesses to it. I understood from many hands that my company was not distasteful to him, and that the subjects about which we talked most were not unacceptable; and he expressed himself often not ill-pleased with many things I said to him, and particularly when I visited him in his last sickness; so that I hope it may not be altogether unprofitable to publish the substance of those matters about which we argued so freely, with our reasoning upon them; and perhaps what had some effects on him may be not altogether ineffectual upon others. I followed him with such arguments as I saw were most likely to prevail with him; and my not urging other reasons proceeded not from any distrust I had of their force, but from the necessity of using those that were most proper for him. He was then in a low state of health, and seemed to be slowly recovering of a

great disease. He was in the milk diet, and apt to fall into hectical fits; any accident weakened him, so that he thought he could not live long; and, when he went from London, he said he believed he should never come to town more. Yet, during his being in town, he was so well, that he went often abroad, and had great vivacity of spirits; so that he was under no such decay as either darkened or weakened his understanding; nor was he any way troubled with the spleen, or vapours, or under the power of melancholy. What he was then, compared to what he had been formerly, I could not so well judge, who had seen him but twice before. Others have told me they perceived no difference in his parts. This I mention more particularly, that it may not be thought that melancholy, or the want of spirits, made him more inclined to receive any impressions: for indeed I never discovered any such thing in him.

Having thus opened the way to the heads of our discourse, I shall next mention them. The three chief things we talked about were morality, natural religion, and revealed religion; Christianity in particular. For morality, he confessed he saw the necessity of it, both for the government of the world, and for the preservation of health, life, and friendship; and was very much ashamed of his former practices, rather because he had made himself a beast, and had brought pain and sickness on his body, and had suffered much in his reputation, than from any deep sense of a Supreme Being or another state.

But so far this went with him, that he resolved firmly to change the course of his life, which he thought he should effect by the study of philosophy, and had not a few no less solid than pleasant notions concerning the folly and madness of vice. But he confessed he had no remorse for his past actions as offences against God, but only as injuries to himself and to mankind.

Upon this subject I shewed him the defects of philosophy for reforming the world. That it was a matter of speculation, which but few either had the leisure or the capacity to inquire into; but the principle that must reform mankind, must be obvious to every man's understanding. That philosophy, in matters of morality, beyond the great lines of our duty, had no very certain fixed rule; but, in the less offices and instances of our duty, went much by the fancies of men and customs of nations; and consequently could not have authority enough to bear down the propensities of nature, appetite, or passion: for which I instanced in these two points; the one was about that maxim of the Stoics, to extirpate all sort of passion and concern for any thing. That, take it by one hand, seemed desirable, because if it could be accomplished, it would make all the accidents of life easy; but I think it cannot, because nature, after all our striving against it, will still return to itself: yet, on the other hand, it dissolved the bonds of nature and friendship, and slackened industry, which will move but dully without an inward heat; and, if it delivered a man from any

troubles, it deprived him of the chief pleasures of life, which arise from friendship. The other was concerning the restraint of pleasure, how far that was to go. Upon this he told me, the two maxims of his morality then were, that he should do nothing to the hurt of any other, or that might prejudice his own health, and he thought that all pleasure, when it did not interfere with these, was to be indulged as the gratification of our natural appetites. It seemed unreasonable to imagine these were put into a man only to be restrained, or curbed to such a narrowness: this he applied to the free use of wine and women.

To this I answered, that if appetites being natural was an argument for the indulging them, then the revengeful might as well allege it for murder, and the covetous for stealing, whose appetites are no less keen on those objects, and yet it is acknowledged that these appetites ought to be curbed. If the difference is urged from the injury that another person receives, the injury is as great, if a man's wife is defiled or his daughter corrupted; and it is impossible for a man to let his appetites loose to vagrant lusts, and not to transgress in these particulars: so there was no curing the disorders that must arise from thence but by regulating these appetites. And why should we not as well think that God intended our brutish and sensual appetites should be governed by our reason, as that the fierceness of beasts should be managed and tamed by the wisdom and for the use of man? So that it is no real absurdity to grant that

appetites were put into men on purpose to exercise their reason in the restraint and government of them; which to be able to do, ministers a higher and more lasting pleasure to a man than to give them their full scope and range. And, if other rules of philosophy be observed, such as the avoiding those objects that stir passion, nothing raises higher passions than ungoverned lust; nothing darkens the understanding and depresses a man's mind more, nor is any thing managed with more frequent returns of other immoralities, such as oaths and imprecations, which are only intended to compass what is desired: the expense that is necessary to maintain these irregularities, makes a man false in his other dealings. All this he freely confessed was true: upon which I urged, that, if it was reasonable for a man to regulate his appetite in things which he knew were hurtful to him, was it not as reasonable for God to prescribe a regulation of those appetites whose unrestrained course did produce such mischievous effects. That it could not be denied, but doing to others what we would have others do unto us, was a just rule: those men, then, that knew how extremely sensible they themselves would be of the dishonour of their families, in the case of their wives or daughters, must needs condemn themselves for doing that which they could not bear from another; and, if the peace of mankind, and the entire satisfaction of our whole life, ought to be one of the chief measures of our actions, then let all the world judge, whether a man that confines his appetite, and lives contented at home, is not much happier

than those that let their desires run after forbidden objects. The thing being granted to be better in itself, then the question falls between the restraint of appetite, in some instances, and the freedom of a man's thoughts, the soundness of his health, his application to affairs, with the easiness of his whole life; whether the one is not to be done before the other? As to the difficulty of such a restraint, though it is not easy to be done, when a man allows himself many liberties in which it is not possible for him to stop, yet those who avoid the occasions that may kindle these impure flames, and keep themselves well employed, find the victory and dominion over them no such impossible or hard matter as may seem at first view; so that, though the philosophy and morality of this point were plain, yet there is not strength enough in that principle to subdue nature and appetite. Upon this I urged, that morality could not be a strong thing, unless a man were determined by a law within himself; for if he only measured himself by decency, or the laws of the land, this would teach him only to use such cautions in his ill-practices, that they should not break out too visibly; but would never carry him to an inward and universal probity. That virtue was of so complicated a nature, that, unless a man came entirely within its discipline, he could not adhere steadfastly to any one precept; for vices are often made necessary supports to one another. That this cannot be done, either steadily or with any satisfaction, unless the mind does inwardly comply with, and

delight in the dictates of virtue; and that could not be effected, except a man's nature were internally regenerated and changed by a higher principle: till that came about, corrupt nature would be strong, and philosophy but feeble, especially when it struggled with such appetites or passions as were much kindled, or deeply rooted in the constitution of one's body. This, he said, sounded to him like enthusiasm or canting: he had no notion of it, and so could not understand it. He comprehended the dictates of reason and philosophy, in which, as the mind became much conversant, there would soon follow, as he believed, a greater easiness in obeying its precepts. I told him, on the other hand, that all his speculations of philosophy would not serve him in any stead to the reforming of his nature and life, till he applied himself to God for inward assistances. It was certain that the impressions made in his reason governed him as they were lively presented to him; but these are so apt to slip out of our memory, and we so apt to turn our thoughts from them, and at some times the contrary impressions are so strong, that, let a man set up a reasoning in his mind against them, he finds that celebrated saying of the poet—

Video meliora probbque; deteriora sequor—

"I see what is better, and approve it; but follow what is worse"—

to be all that philosophy will amount to. Whereas those who, upon such occasions, apply themselves to God by earnest prayer, feel a disengagement from

such impressions, and themselves endued with a power to resist them; so that those bonds which formerly held them fall off.

This he said must be the effect of a heat in nature: it was only the strong diversion of the thoughts that gave the seeming victory, and he did not doubt, but, if one could turn to a problem in Euclid, or to write a copy of verses, it would have the same effect. To this I answered, that, if such methods did only divert the thoughts, there might be some force in what he said; but, if they not only drove out such inclinations, but begat impressions contrary to them, and brought men into a new disposition and habit of mind, then he must confess there was somewhat more than a diversion in these changes, which were brought on our minds by true devotion. I added, that reason and experience were the things that determined our persuasions: that as experience without reason may be thought the delusion of our fancy, so reason without experience had not so convincing an operation; but these two meeting together must needs give a man all the satisfaction he can desire. He could not say it was unreasonable to believe that the Supreme Being might make some thoughts stir in our minds with more or less force as it pleased; especially, the force of these motions being, for the most part, according to the impression that was made on our brains, which that Power that directed the whole frame of nature, could make grow deeper as it pleased. It was also reasonable to suppose God a being of such goodness, that he would give his assistance to

such as desired it; for, though he might, upon some greater occasions, in an extraordinary manner turn some people's minds, yet, since he had endued man with a faculty of reason, it is fit that men should employ that as far as they could, and beg his assistance, which certainly they can do. All this seemed reasonable, and at last probable. Now good men, who felt, upon their frequent applications to God in prayer, a freedom from those ill impressions that formerly subdued them, an inward love to virtue and true goodness, an easiness and delight in all the parts of holiness, which was fed and cherished in them by a seriousness in prayer, and did languish as that went off, had as real a perception of an inward strength in their minds, that did rise and fall with true devotion, as they perceived the strength of their bodies increased or abated, according as they had or wanted good nourishment.

After many discourses upon this subject, he still continued to think all was the effect of fancy. He said that he understood nothing of it, but acknowledged that he thought they were happy whose fancies were under the power of such impressions, since they had somewhat on which their thoughts rested and centered; but, when I saw him in his last sickness, he then told me he had another sense of what he had talked of concerning prayer and inward assistances. This subject led us to discourse of God, and of the notion of religion in general. He believed there was a Supreme Being: he could not think the world was made by chance, and the regular course

of nature seemed to demonstrate the eternal power of its Author. This, he said, he could never shake off; but when he came to explain his notion of the Deity, he said he looked on it as a vast power that wrought every thing by the necessity of its nature; and thought that God had none of those affections of love or hatred which bred perturbation in us; and by consequence, he could not see that there was to be either reward or punishment. He thought our conceptions of God were so low, that we had better not think much of him; and to love God seemed to him a presumptuous thing, and the heat of fanciful men. Therefore he believed there should be no other religious worship but a general celebration of that Being in some short hymn: all the other parts of worship he esteemed the inventions of priests, to make the world believe they had a secret of incensing and appeasing God as they pleased. In a word, he was neither persuaded that there was a special providence about human affairs, nor that prayers were of much use, since that was to look on God as a weak being, that would be overcome with importunities. And, for the state after death, though he thought the soul did not dissolve at death, yet he doubted much of rewards or punishments: the one he thought too high for us to attain by our slight services; and the other was too extreme to be inflicted for sin. This was the substance of his speculations about God and religion.

I told him his notions of God were so low, that the Supreme Being seemed to be nothing but nature. For, if that Being had no freedom or choice of its own

actions, nor operated by wisdom or goodness, all those reasons which led him to acknowledge a God were contrary to this conceit; for, if the order of the universe persuaded him to think there was a God, he must at the same time conceive him to be both wise and good, as well as powerful, since these all appeared equally in the creation, though his wisdom and goodness had ways of exerting themselves that were far beyond our notions or measures. If God was wise and good, he would naturally love and be pleased with those that resemble him in these perfections, and dislike those that were opposite to him. Every rational Being naturally loves itself, and is delighted in others like itself, and is averse from what is not so. Truth is a rational nature's acting in conformity to itself in all things, and goodness is an inclination to promote the happiness of other beings: so truth and goodness were the essential perfections of every reasonable being, and certainly most eminently in the Deity. Nor does his mercy or love raise passion or perturbation in him; for we feel that to be a weakness in ourselves, which indeed only flows from a want of power or skill to do what we wish or desire. It is also reasonable to believe God would assist the endeavours of the good with some helps suitable to their nature; and that it could not be imagined, that those who imitated him should not be especially favoured by him; and therefore, since this did not appear in this state, it was most reasonable to think it should be in another, where the rewards shall be an admission to a more perfect state of conformity to

God, with the felicity that follows it; and the punishments should be a total exclusion from him, with all the horror and darkness that must follow that. These seemed to be the natural results of such several courses of life, as well as the effects of divine justice, rewarding or punishing. For, since he believed the soul had a distinct subsistence, separated from the body upon its dissolution, there was no reason to think it passed into a state of utter oblivion of what it had been in formerly: but that, as the reflections on the good or evil it had done must raise joy or horror in it, so those good or ill dispositions accompanying the departed souls, they must either rise up to a higher perfection, or sink to a more depraved and miserable state. In this life, variety of affairs and objects do much cool and divert our minds; and are, on the one hand, often great temptations to the good, and give the bad some ease in their trouble; but in a state wherein the soul shall be separated from sensible things, and employed in a more quick and sublime way of operation, this must very much exalt the joys and improvements of the good, and as much heighten the horror and rage of the wicked. So that it seemed a vain thing to pretend to believe a Supreme Being that is wise and good, as well as great, and not to think a discrimination will be made between the good and the bad, which it is manifest is not fully done in this life.

As for the government of the world, if we believe the Supreme Power made it, there is no reason to think he does not govern it; for all that we can

fancy against it, is the distraction which that infinite variety of second causes, and the care of their concernments, must give to the first, if it inspects them all. But, as among men, those of weaker capacities are wholly taken up with some one thing, whereas those of more enlarged powers can without distraction have many things within their care,—as the eye can at one view receive a great variety of objects in that narrow compass without confusion,—so, if we conceive the Divine understanding to be as far above ours as his power of creating and framing the whole universe is above our limited activity, we shall no more think the government of the world a distraction to him; and if we have once overcome this prejudice, we shall be ready to acknowledge a providence directing all affairs,—a care well becoming the great Creator.

As for worshipping him, if we imagine our worship is a thing that adds to his happiness, or gives him such a fond pleasure as weak people have to hear themselves commended, or that our repeated addresses do overcome him through our mere importunity, we have certainly very unworthy thoughts of him. The true ends of worship come within another consideration, which is *this*: a man is never entirely reformed till a new principle governs his thoughts; nothing makes that principle so strong, as deep and frequent meditations of God, whose nature, though it be far above our comprehension, yet his goodness and wisdom are such perfections as fall within our imagination; and he that thinks often of God, and

considers him as governing the world, and as ever observing all his actions, will feel a very sensible effect of such meditations, as they grow more lively and frequent with him; so the end of religious worship, either public or private, is to make the apprehensions of God have a deeper root and a stronger influence on us. The frequent returns of these are necessary, lest, if we allow too long intervals between them, these impressions may grow feebler, and other suggestions may come in their room; and the returns of prayer are not to be considered as favours extorted by mere importunity, but as rewards conferred on men so well disposed and prepared for them, according to the promises that God has made for answering our prayers, thereby to engage and nourish a devout temper in us, which is the chief root of all true holiness and virtue.

It is true, we cannot have suitable notions of the Divine essence, as indeed we have no just idea of any essence whatsoever, since we commonly consider all things either by their outward figure or by their effects, and from thence make inferences what their nature must be; so, though we cannot frame any perfect image in our minds of the Divinity, yet we may, from the discoveries God has made of himself, form such conceptions of him, as may possess our minds with great reverence for him, and beget in us such a love of those perfections as to engage us to imitate them. For, when we say we love God, the meaning is, we love that Being that is holy, just, good, wise, and infinitely perfect: and loving these attributes in

that object will certainly carry us to desire them in ourselves. For, whatever we love in another, we naturally, according to the degree of our love, endeavour to resemble it. In some the loving and worshipping God, though they are just and reasonable returns and expressions of the sense we have of his goodness to us, yet they are exacted of us not only as a tribute to God, but as a mean to beget in us a conformity to his nature, which is the chief end of pure and undefiled religion.

If some men have at several times found out inventions to corrupt this, and cheat the world, it is nothing but what occurs in every sort of employment to which men betake themselves:—mountebanks corrupt physic; pettifoggers have entangled the matters of property; and all professions have been vitiated by the knaveries of a number of their calling.

With all these discourses he was not equally satisfied: he seemed convinced that the impressions of God being much in men's minds would be the powerful means to reform the world; and did not seem determined against providence. But, for the next state, he thought it more likely that the soul began anew, and that her sense of what she had done in this body lying in the figures that are made in the brain, as soon as she dislodged, all these perished, and that the soul went into some other state, to begin a new course. But I said, on this head, that this was at best a conjecture, raised in him by his fancy; for he could give no reason to prove it true; nor was all the remembrance our souls had of past things seated in some material

figures lodged in the brain, though it could not be denied but a great deal of it lay in the brain. That we have many abstracted notions and ideas of immaterial things which depend not on bodily figures: some sins, such as falsehood and ill-nature, were seated in the mind, as lust and appetite were in the body; and, as the whole body was the receptacle of the soul, and the eyes and ears were the organs of seeing and hearing, so was the brain the seat of memory: yet the power and faculty of memory, as well as of seeing and hearing, lay in the mind; and so it was no inconceivable thing, that either the soul, by its own strength, or by the means of some subtler organs which might be fitted for it in another state, should still remember as well as think. But indeed we know so little of the nature of our souls, that it is a vain thing for us to raise an hypothesis out of the conjectures we have about it, or to reject one because of some difficulties that occur to us, since it is as hard to understand how we remember things now, as how we shall do it in another state: only we are sure we do it now, and so we shall be then when we do it.

When I pressed him with the secret joys that a good man felt, particularly as he drew near death, and the horrors of ill men, especially at that time, he was willing to ascribe it to the impressions they had from their education; but he often confessed, that, whether the business of religion was true or not, he thought those who had the persuasions of it, and lived so that they had quiet in their consciences, and believed God

governed the world, and acquiesced in his providence, and had the hope of an endless blessedness in another state, the happiest men in the world; and said, he would give all that he was master of, to be under those persuasions, and to have the supports and joys that must needs flow from them. I told him, the main root of all corruptions in men's principles was their ill life; which, as it darkened their minds, and disabled them from discerning better things, so it made it necessary for them to seek out such opinions as might give them ease from those clamours that would have otherwise been raised within them. He did not deny but that, after the doing of some things, he felt great and severe challenges within himself; but he said, he felt not these after some others, which I would perhaps call far greater sins than those that affected him more sensibly. This, I said, might flow from the disorders he had cast himself into, which had corrupted his judgment, and vitiated his taste of things; and, by his long continuance in, and frequent repeating of, some immoralities, he had made them so familiar to him, that they were become as it were natural; and then it was no wonder if he had not so exact a sense of what was good or evil; as a feverish man cannot judge of tastes.

He did acknowledge, the whole system of religion, if believed, was a greater foundation of quiet than any other thing whatsoever; for all the quiet he had in his mind was, that he could not think so good a being as the Deity would make him miserable. I asked if, when by the ill course of his life he had brought so

many diseases on his body, he could blame God for it, or expect that he should deliver him from them by a miracle? He confessed there was no reason for that. I then urged, that, if sin should cast the mind, by a natural effect, into endless horrors and agonies, which being seated in a being not subject to death, must last for ever, unless some miraculous power interposed—could he accuse God for that which was the effect of his own choice and ill life?

He said, they were happy that believed; for it was not in every man's power.

And upon this we discoursed long about revealed religion. He said he did not understand the business of inspiration: he believed the penmen of the Scriptures had heats and honesty, and so wrote; but could not comprehend how God should reveal his secrets to mankind. Why was not man made a creature more disposed for religion, and better illuminated? He could not apprehend how there should be any corruption in the nature of man, or a lapse derived from Adam. God's communicating his mind to one man was the putting it in his power to cheat the world; for prophecies and miracles, the world had been always full of strange stories; for, the boldness and cunning of contrivers, meeting with the simplicity and credulity of the people, things were easily received; and, being once received, passed down without contradiction. The incoherences of style in the Scriptures, the odd transitions, the seeming contradictions, chiefly about the order of time, the cruelties enjoined the Israelites in destroying the Canaanites, circum-

cision, and many other rites of the Jewish worship, seemed to him unsuitable to the Divine nature; and the first three chapters of Genesis he thought could not be true, unless they were parables. This was the substance of what he excepted to revealed religion in general, and to the Old Testament in particular.

I answered to all this, that, believing a thing upon the testimony of another, in other matters where there was no reason to suspect the testimony, chiefly where it was confirmed by other circumstances, was not only a reasonable thing, but it was the hinge on which all the government and justice in the world depended; since all the courts of justice proceed upon the evidence given by witnesses; for the use of writings is but a thing more lately brought into the world. So then, if the credibility of the thing, the innocence and disinterestedness of the witnesses, the number of them, and the most public confirmations that could possibly be given, do concur to persuade us of any matter of fact, it is a vain thing to say, because it is possible for so many men to agree in a lie, that therefore these have done it. In all other things, a man gives his assent when the credibility is strong on the one side, and there appears nothing on the other side to balance it. So, such numbers agreeing in their testimony to these miracles, (for instance, of our Saviour's calling Lazarus out of the grave the fourth day after he was buried, and his own rising again after he was certainly dead,) if there had been never so many impostures in the world, no man can with

any reasonable colour pretend this was one. We find, both by the Jewish and Roman writers that lived in that time, that our Saviour was crucified, and that all his disciples and followers believed certainly that he rose again. They believed this upon the testimony of the apostles, and many hundreds who saw it, and died confirming it. They went about to persuade the world of it with great zeal, though they knew they were to get nothing by it but reproach and sufferings; and by many wonders which they wrought, they confirmed their testimony. Now, to avoid all this, by saying it is possible this might be a contrivance, and to give no presumption to make it so much as probable that it was so, is, in plain English, to say, "We are resolved, let the evidence be what it will, we will not believe it."

He said, if a man says he cannot believe, what help is there? For he was not master of his own belief, and believing was at highest but a probable opinion. To this I answered, that, if a man let a wanton conceit possess his fancy against these things, and never consider the evidence for religion on the other hand, but reject it upon a slight view of it, he ought not to say he cannot, but he will not, believe; and, while a man lives an ill course of life, he is not fitly qualified to examine the matter aright. Let him grow calm and virtuous, and upon due application examine things fairly, and then let him pronounce according to his conscience, if, to take it at its lowest, the reasons on the one hand are not much stronger than they are on the other. For I found he was so

possessed with the general conceit that a mixture of knaves and fools had made all extraordinary things be easily believed, that it carried him away to determine the matter without so much as looking on the evidence for the historical truth of Christianity, which he had not inquired into, but had bent all his wit and study to the support of the other side. As for that, that believing is at best but an opinion: if the evidence be but probable, it is so; but if it be such that it cannot be questioned, it grows as certain as knowledge: for we are no less certain that there is a great town called Constantinople, the seat of the Ottoman empire, than that there is another called London. We as little doubt that Queen Elizabeth once reigned, as that King Charles now [in 1680] reigns in England. So that believing may be as certain, and as little subject to doubting, as seeing or knowing.

There are two sorts of believing divine matters; the one is wrought in us by our comparing all the evidences of matter of fact, for the confirmation of revealed religion, with the prophecies in the Scripture; where things were punctually predicted, some ages before their completion; not in dark and doubtful words, uttered like oracles, which might bend to any event, but in plain terms, as the foretelling that Cyrus by name should send the Jews back from the captivity, after the fixed period of seventy years; the history of the Syrian and Egyptian kings, so punctually foretold by Daniel; and the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, with many circum-

stances relating to it, made by our Saviour: joining these to the excellent rule and design of the Scripture in matters of morality, it is at least as reasonable to believe this as any thing else in the world. Yet such a believing as this is only a general persuasion in the mind, which has not that effect, till a man, applying himself to the directions set down in the Scriptures, (which, upon such evidence, cannot be denied to be as reasonable as for a man to follow the prescriptions of a learned physician, and, when the rules are both good and easy, to submit to them for the recovery of his health,) and by following these finds a power entering within him that frees him from the slavery of his appetites and passions, that exalts his mind above the accidents of life, and spreads an inward purity in his heart, from which a serene and calm joy arises within him: and good men, by the efficacy these methods have upon them, and from the returns of their prayers and other endeavours, grow assured that these things are true, and answerable to the promises they find registered in Scripture. All this, he said, might be fancy: but to this I answered, that, as it were unreasonable to tell a man that is abroad, and knows he is awake, that perhaps he is in a dream, and in his bed, and only thinks he is abroad; or that, as some go about in their sleep, so he may be asleep still; so good and religious men know, though others might be abused by their fancies, that they are under no such deception; and find they are neither hot nor enthusiastical, but under the power of calm and

clear principles. All this he said he did not understand; and that it was to assert or beg the thing in question, which he could not comprehend.

As for the possibility of revelation, it was a vain thing to deny it; for, as God gives us the sense of seeing material objects by our eyes, and has opened in some a capacity of apprehending high and sublime things, of which other men seemed utterly incapable, so it was a weak assertion that God cannot awaken a power, in some men's minds, to apprehend and know some things in such a manner that others are not capable of it. This is not half so incredible to us as sight is to a blind man; who yet may be convinced there is a strange power of seeing that governs men, of which he finds himself deprived. As for the capacity put into such men's hands to deceive the world, we are at the same time to consider, that, besides the probity of their tempers, it cannot be thought but God can so forcibly bind up a man, in some things, that it should not be in his power to deliver them, otherwise than as he gives them in commission. Besides, the confirmation of miracles is a divine credential to warrant such persons in what they deliver to the world, which cannot be imagined can be joined to a lie, since this were to put the omnipotence of God to attest that which no honest man would do.—For the business of the fall of man, and other things, of which we cannot perhaps give ourselves a perfect account; we, who cannot fathom the secrets of the counsel of God, do very unreasonably to take on us to reject an

excellent system of good and holy rules, because we cannot satisfy ourselves about some difficulties in them. Common experience tells us there is a great disorder in our natures, which is not easily rectified. All philosophers were sensible of it, and every man that designs to govern himself by reason, feels the struggle between it and nature; so that it is plain there is a lapse of the high powers of the soul.

But why, said he, could not this be rectified by some plain rules given; but men must come and shew a trick, to persuade the world they speak to them in the name of God? I answered, that religion, being a design to recover and save mankind, was to be so opened as to awaken and work upon all sorts of people; and generally men of a simplicity of mind were those that were the fittest objects for God to shew his favour to; therefore it was necessary that messengers sent from heaven should appear with such alarming evidence as might awaken the world, and prepare them, by some astonishing signs, to listen to the doctrine they were to deliver. Philosophy, that was only a matter of fine speculation, had few votaries; and, as there was no authority in it to bind the world to believe its dictates, so they were only received by some of nobler and refined natures, who could apply themselves to, and delight in such notions. But true religion was to be built on a foundation that should carry more weight on it, and to have such convictions as might not only reach those who were already disposed to receive them, but rouse up such as, without great and sen-

sible excitation, would have otherwise slept on in their ill courses.

Upon this and some such occasions, I told him, I saw the ill use he made of his wit, by which he slurred the gravest things with a slight dash of his fancy; and the pleasure he found in such wanton expressions, as calling the doing of miracles the shewing of a trick, did really keep him from examining them with that care which such things required.

For the Old Testament, we are so remote from that time, we have so little knowledge of the language in which it was writ, have so imperfect an account of the history of those ages, know nothing of their customs, forms of speech, and the several periods they might have by which they reckon their time, that it is rather a wonder we should understand so much of it, than that many passages in it should be so dark to us. The chief use of it, as to us Christians, is, that, from writings which the Jews acknowledged to be divinely inspired, it is manifest the Messiah was promised before the destruction of their temple; which being done long ago, and these prophecies agreeing to our Saviour, and to no other, here is a great confirmation given to the Gospel. But, though many things in these books could not be understood by us who live above 3000 years after the chief of them were written, it is no such extraordinary matter.

For that of the destruction of the Canaanites by the Israelites, it is to be considered, that, if God had

sent a plague among them all, that could not have been found fault with. If, then, God had a right to take away their lives without injustice or cruelty, he had a right to appoint others to do it, as well as to execute it by a more immediate way; and the taking away people by the sword is a much gentler way of dying than to be smitten with a plague or a famine. And for the children that were innocent of their fathers' faults, God could in another state make that up to them. So all the difficulty is, why were the Israelites commanded to execute a *thing* of such barbarity? But this will not seem so hard if we consider that this was to be no precedent for future times; since they did not do it but upon special warrant and commission from heaven, evidenced to all the world by such mighty miracles as did plainly shew that they were particularly designed by God, to be the executioners of his justice; and God by employing them in so severe a service, intended to possess them with great horror of idolatry, which was punished in so extreme a manner.

For the rites of their religion, we can ill judge of them, except we perfectly understood the idolatries round about them, to which we find they were much inclined; so they were to be bent by other rites to an extreme aversion from them: and yet, by the pomp of many of their ceremonies and sacrifices, great indulgences were given to a people naturally fond of a visible splendour in religious worship. In all which, if we cannot descend to such satisfactory answers, in every particular, as a curious man would

desire, it is no wonder. The long interval of time, and other accidents, have worn out those things which were necessary to give us a clearer light into the meaning of them. And for the story of the creation, how far some things in it may be parabolical, and how far historical, has been disputed: there is nothing in it that may not be historically true: for if it be acknowledged that spirits can form voices in the air, (for which we have as good authority as for any thing in history,) then it is no wonder that Eve, being so lately created, might be deceived, and think a serpent spake to her, when the evil spirit framed the voice.

But, in all these things, I told him he was in the wrong way, when he examined the business of religion by some dark parts of Scripture; therefore I desired him to consider the whole contexture of the Christian religion, the rules it gives, and the methods it prescribes. Nothing can conduce more to the peace, order, and happiness of the world, than to be governed by its rules. Nothing is more for the interest of every man in particular: the rules of sobriety, temperance and moderation, were the best preservers of life, and, which was perhaps more, of health; humility, contempt of the vanities of the world, and the being well employed, raise a man's mind to a freedom from the follies and temptations that haunted the greatest part. Nothing was so generous and great as to supply the necessities of the poor and to forgive injuries; nothing raised and maintained a man's reputation so much as to be

exactly just and merciful, kind, charitable and compassionate; nothing opened the powers of a man's soul so much as a calm temper, a serene mind, free of passion and disorder; nothing made societies, families, and neighbourhoods, so happy, as when these rules, which the Gospel prescribes, took place —of doing as we would have others do to us, and loving our neighbours as ourselves.

The Christian worship was also plain and simple, suitable to so pure a doctrine. The ceremonies of it were few and significant, as the admission to it by a washing with water, and the memorial of our Saviour's death in bread and wine. The motives in it to persuade to this purity were strong: that God sees us, and will judge us for all our actions: that we shall be for ever happy or miserable as we pass our lives here: the example of our Saviour's life, and the great expressions of his love in dying for us, are mighty engagements to obey and imitate him. The plain way of expression, used by our Saviour and his apostles, shews there was no artifice, where there was so much simplicity used: there were no secrets kept only among the priests, but every thing was open to all Christians: the rewards of holiness are not entirely put over to another state, but good men are specially blest with peace in their consciences, great joy in the confidence they have of the love of God, and of seeing him for ever, and often a signal course of blessings follows them in their whole lives; but if at other times calamities fell on them, these were so much mitigated by the patience they

were taught, and the inward assistances with which they were furnished, that even those crosses were converted to blessings.

I desired he would lay all these things together, and see what he could except to them to make him think this was a contrivance. Interest appears in all human contrivances; our Saviour plainly had none; he avoided applause, withdrew himself from the offers of a crown; he submitted to poverty and reproach, and much contradiction in his life, and to a most ignominious and painful death. His apostles had none either; they did not pretend either to power or wealth; but delivered a doctrine that must needs condemn them, if they ever made such use of it; they declared their commission fully without reserves till other times; they recorded their own weakness; some of them wrought with their own hands; and, when they received the charities of their converts, it was not so much to supply their own necessities as to distribute to others; they knew they were to suffer much for giving their testimonies to what they had seen and heard; in which so many, in a thing so visible as Christ's resurrection and ascension, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost which he had promised, could not be deceived; and they gave such public confirmations of it, by the wonders they themselves wrought, that great multitudes were converted to a doctrine, which, besides the opposition it gave to lust and passion, was borne down and persecuted for three hundred years; and yet its force was such, that it not only weathered

out all those storms, but even grew and spread vastly under them. Pliny, about threescore years after, found their numbers great, and their lives innocent; and even Lucian, amidst all his raillery, gives a high testimony to their charity and contempt of life, and the other virtues of the Christians; which is likewise more than once done by malice itself, Julian the Apostate.

If a man will lay all this in one balance, and compare with it the few exceptions brought to it, he will soon find how strong the one, and how slight the other. Therefore it was an improper way to begin at some cavils about some passages in the New Testament, or the Old, and from thence to prepossess one's mind against the whole. The right method had been first to consider the whole matter, and from so general a view to descend to more particular inquiries; whereas they suffered their minds to be forestalled with prejudices; so that they never examined the matter impartially.

To the greatest part of this he seemed to assent, only he excepted to the belief of mysteries in the Christian religion; which he thought no man could do, since it is not in a man's power to believe that which he cannot comprehend, and of which he can have no notion. The believing mysteries, he said, made way for all the jugglings of priests; for they, getting the people under them in that point, set out to them what they pleased; and giving it a hard name and calling it a mystery, the people were tamed, and easily believed it. The restraining a man

from the use of women, except one in the way of marriage, and denying the remedy of divorce, he thought unreasonable impositions on the freedom of mankind: and the business of the clergy, and their maintenance, with the belief of some authority and power conveyed in their orders, looked, as he thought, like a piece of contrivance; and why, said he, must a man tell me, I cannot be saved, unless I believe things against my reason, and then that I must pay him for telling me of them? These were all the exceptions which at any time I heard from him to Christianity; to which I made these answers:

For mysteries, it is plain there is in every thing somewhat that is unaccountable. How animals or men are formed in their mothers' bellies, how seeds grow in the earth, how the soul dwells in the body, and acts and moves it; how we retain the figures of many words or things in our memories, and how we draw them out so easily and orderly in our thoughts or discourses; how sight and hearing were so quick and distinct; how we move, and how bodies were compounded and united; these things, if we follow them into all the difficulties that we may raise about them, will appear every whit as unaccountable as any mystery of religion; and a blind or deaf man would judge sight or hearing as incredible as any mystery may be judged by us; for our reason is not equal to them. In the same rank, different degrees of age or capacity raise some far above others, so that children cannot fathom the learning, nor weak persons the counsels, of more illuminated minds; therefore it was

no wonder if we could not understand the Divine essence. We cannot imagine how two such different natures as a soul and body should so unite together, and be mutually affected with one another's concerns; and how the soul has one principle of reason, by which it acts intellectually, and another of life, by which it joins to the body, and acts vitally: two principles so widely differing both in their nature and operation, and yet united in one and the same person. There might be as many hard arguments brought against the possibility of these things, which yet every one knows to be true, from speculative notions, as against the mysteries mentioned in the Scriptures. As that of the Trinity, that in one essence there are three different principles of operation, which, for want of terms fit to express them by, we call persons, and are called in Scripture, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that the second of these did unite himself in a most intimate manner with the human nature of Jesus Christ; and that the sufferings he underwent were accepted of God as a sacrifice for our sins; who thereupon conferred on him a power of granting eternal life to all that submit to the terms on which he offers it; and that the matter of which our bodies once consisted, which may as justly be called the bodies we laid down at our deaths as these can be said to be the bodies which we formerly lived in, being refined and made more spiritual, shall be reunited to our souls, and become a fit instrument for them in a more perfect estate; and that God inwardly bends and moves our wills by

such impressions as he can make on our bodies and minds.

These, which are the chief mysteries of our religion, are neither so unreasonable, that any other objection lies against them, but this, that they agree not with our common notions, nor so unaccountable that somewhat like them cannot be assigned in other things, which are believed really to be, though the manner of them cannot be apprehended: so this ought not to be any just objection to the submission of our reason to what we cannot so well conceive, provided our belief of it be well grounded. There have been too many niceties brought indeed rather to darken than explain these: they have been defended by weak arguments, and illustrated by similies not always so very apt and pertinent; and new subtilties have been added, which have rather perplexed than cleared them. All this cannot be denied: the opposition of heretics anciently occasioned too much curiosity among the fathers, which the schoolmen have wonderfully advanced of late times. But if mysteries were received rather in the simplicity in which they are delivered in the Scriptures than according to the descantings of fanciful men upon them, they would not appear much more incredible than some of the common objects of sense and perception. And it is a needless fear, that, if some mysteries are acknowledged, which are plainly mentioned in the New Testament, it will then be in the power of the priests to add more at their pleasure. For it is an absurd inference from our being bound

to assent to some truths about the Divine essence, of which the manner is not understood, to argue that, therefore, in an object presented daily to our senses, such as bread and wine, we should be bound to believe, against their testimony, that it is not what our senses perceive it to be, but the whole flesh and blood of Christ, an entire body being in every crumb and drop of it. It is not, indeed, in a man's power to believe thus against his sense and reason, where the object is proportioned to them, and fitly applied, and the organs are under no indisposition or disorder: It is certain that no mystery is to be admitted but upon very clear and express authorities from Scripture, which could not reasonably be understood in any other sense. And, though a man cannot form an explicit notion of a mystery, for then it would be no longer a mystery, yet, in general, he may believe a thing to be, though he cannot give, himself, a particular account of the way of it; or, rather, though he cannot answer some objections which lie against it. We know we believe many such in human matters, which are more within our reach; and it is very unreasonable to say we may not do it in divine things, which are much more above our apprehensions.

For the severe restraint of the use of women, it is hard to deny that privilege to Jesus Christ, as a lawgiver, to lay such restraints as all inferior legislators do; who, when they find the liberties their subjects take prove hurtful to them, set such limits, and make such regulations, as they judge necessary and expedient. It cannot be said, but the restraint of appetite

is necessary in some instances; and, if it is necessary in these, perhaps other restraints are no less necessary to fortify and secure them: for, if it be acknowledged that men have a property in their wives and daughters, so that to defile the one, or corrupt the other, is an unjust and injurious thing, it is certain that, except a man carefully governs his appetites, he will break through these restraints; and, therefore, our Saviour, knowing that nothing could so effectually deliver the world from the mischief of unrestrained appetite as such a confinement, might very reasonably enjoin it. And in all such cases, we are to balance the inconveniences on both hands; and, where we find they are heaviest, we are to acknowledge the equity of the law. On the one hand there is no prejudice but the restraint of appetite; on the other are the mischiefs of being given up to pleasure, of running inordinately into it, of breaking the quiet of our own family at home and of others abroad, the engaging into much passion, the doing many false and impious things to compass what is desired, the waste of men's estates, time and health. Now, let any man judge whether the prejudices on this side are not greater than that single one on the other side, of being denied some pleasure. For polygamy, it is but reasonable, since women are equally concerned in the laws of marriage, that they should be considered as well as men; but, in a state of polygamy, they are under great misery and jealousy, and are indeed barbarously used. Man being also of a sociable nature, friendship and converse were

among the primitive intendments of marriage; in which, as far as the man may excel the wife in greatness of mind and height of knowledge, the wife some way makes that up with her affection and tender care; so that, from both happily mixed, there arises a harmony, which is, to virtuous minds, one of the greatest joys of life: but all this is gone in a state of polygamy, which occasions perpetual jarrings and jealousies. And the variety does but engage men to a freer range of pleasure; which is not to be put in the balance with the far greater mischiefs that must follow the other course. So that it is plain our Saviour considered the nature of man, what it could bear, and what was fit for it, when he so restrained us in these our liberties. And for divorce, a power to break that bond would too much encourage married persons in the little quarrellings that may arise between them, if it were in their power to depart one from another: for, when they know that cannot be, and that they must live and die together, it does naturally incline them to lay down their resentments, and to endeavour to live together as well as they can. So, the law of the Gospel being a law of love, designed to engage Christians to mutual love, it was fit that all such provisions should be made as might advance and maintain it, and all such liberties be taken away as are apt to enkindle and foment strife. This might fall in some instances to be uneasy and hard enough; but laws consider what falls out most commonly, and cannot provide for all particular cases. The best laws are, in some instances, very great

grievances; but the advantages being balanced with the inconveniences, measures are to be taken accordingly. Upon this whole matter, I said, that pleasure stood in opposition to other considerations of great weight, and so the decision was easy: and, since our Saviour offers us so great rewards, it is but reasonable he have the privilege of loading these promises with such conditions as are not in themselves grateful to our natural inclinations; for all that propose high rewards have thereby a right to exact difficult performances.

To this he said, we are sure the terms are difficult, but are not so sure of the rewards. Upon this I told him, that we have the same assurance of the rewards that we have of the other parts of the Christian religion. We have the promises of God, made to us by Christ, confirmed by many miracles; we have the earnests of these, in the quiet and peace which follow a good conscience, and in the resurrection of him from the dead who hath promised to raise us up. So that the reward is sufficiently assured to us; and there is no reason it should be given to us before the conditions are performed on which the promises are made. It is but reasonable we should trust God, and do our duty, in hopes of that eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised. The difficulties are not so great as those which sometimes the commonest concerns of life bring upon us: the learning some trades or sciences, the governing our health and affairs, bring us often under as great straits: so that it ought to be no just prejudice that there are

some things in religion that are uneasy, since this is rather the effect of our corrupt natures, which are farther depraved by vicious habits, and can hardly turn to any new course of life without some pain, than of the dictates of Christianity, which are in themselves just and reasonable, and will be easy to us when renewed and in a good measure restored to our primitive integrity.

As for the exceptions he had to the maintenance of the clergy, and the authority to which they pretended, if they stretched their designs too far, the Gospel did plainly reprove them for it; so that it was very suitable to that church, which was so grossly faulty this way, to take the Scriptures out of the hands of the people, since they do so manifestly disclaim all such practices. The priests of the true Christian religion have no secrets among them which the world must not know; but are only an order of men, dedicated to God, to attend on sacred things, who ought to be holy in a more peculiar manner, since they are to handle the things of God. It was necessary that such persons should have a due esteem paid them, and a fit maintenance appointed for them, so that they might be preserved from the contempt that follows poverty, and the distractions which the providing against it might otherwise involve them in. And as, in the order of the world, it was necessary, for the support of magistracy and government, and for preserving its esteem, that some state be used, though it is a happiness when great men have philosophical minds to despise the pageantry of it,) so

the plentiful supply of the clergy, if well used and applied by them, will certainly turn to the advantage of religion. And if some men, either through ambition or covetousness, used indirect means, or servile compliances, to aspire to such dignities, and, being possessed of them, apply their wealth either to luxury or vain pomp, or made great fortunes out of it for their families, these were personal failings, in which the doctrine of Christ was not concerned.

He upon that told me plainly, there was nothing that gave him, and many others, a more secret encouragement in their ill ways, than that those who pretended to believe, lived so that they could not be thought to be in earnest when they said it; for he was sure religion was either a mere contrivance, or the most important thing that could be: so that, if he once believed, he would set himself in great earnest to live suitably to it. The aspirings that he had observed at court of some of the clergy, with the servile ways they took to attain to preferment, and the animosities among those of several parties about trifles, made him often think they suspected the things were not true, which in their sermons and discourses they so earnestly recommended. Of this he had gathered many instances: I knew some of them were mistakes and calumnies; yet I could not deny but something of them might be too true: and I publish this the more freely, to put all that pretend to religion, chiefly those that are dedicated to holy functions, in mind of the great obligation that lies on them to live suitable to their profession; since other-

wise a great deal of the irreligion and atheism that are among us may too justly be charged on them: for wicked men are delighted out of measure when they discover ill things in them, and conclude, from thence, not only that they are hypocrites, but that religion itself is a cheat.

But I said to him upon this head, that though no good man could continue in the practice of any known sin, yet such might, by the violence or surprise of a temptation, to which they are liable as much as others, be on a sudden overcome to do an ill thing, to their great grief all their life after; and then it was a very unjust inference, upon some few failings, to conclude that such men do not believe themselves. But, how bad soever many are, it cannot be denied but there are also many, both of the clergy and laity, who give great and real demonstrations of the power religion has over them, in their contempt of the world, the strictness of their lives, their readiness to forgive injuries, to relieve the poor, and to do good on all occasions; and yet even these may have their failings, either in such things in which their constitutions are weak, or their temptations strong and sudden: and in all such cases, we are to judge of men rather by the course of their lives than by the errors that they, through infirmity or surprise, may have slipt into.

These were the chief heads we have discoursed on; and, as far as I can remember, I have faithfully repeated the substance of our arguments. I have not concealed the strongest things he said to me; but,

though I have not enlarged on all the excursions of his wit in setting them off, yet I have given them their full strength, as he expressed them, and, as far as I could recollect, have used his own words; so that I am afraid some may censure me for setting down these things so largely, which impious men may make an ill use of, and gather together to encourage and defend themselves in their vices: but, if they will compare them with the answers made to them, and the sense that so great and refined a wit had of them afterwards, I hope they may, through the blessing of God, be not altogether ineffectual.

The issue of all our discourse was this: he told me, he saw vice and impiety were as contrary to human society as wild beasts let loose would be; and, therefore, he firmly resolved to change the whole method of his life, to become strictly just and true, to be chaste and temperate, to forbear swearing and irreligious discourse, to worship and pray to his Maker; and that, though he was not arrived at a full persuasion of Christianity, he would never employ his wit more to run it down, or to corrupt others.

Of which I have since a farther assurance from a person of quality who conversed much with him the last year of his life; to whom he would often say, that he was happy if he did believe, and that he would never endeavour to draw him from it.

To all this I answered, that a virtuous life would be very uneasy to him unless vicious inclinations were removed: it would otherwise be a perpetual constraint. Nor could it be effected without an in-

ward principle to change him, and that was only to be had by applying himself to God for it in frequent and earnest prayer: and, I was sure, if his mind was once cleared of these disorders, and cured of those distempers which vice brought on it, so great an understanding would soon see through all those flights of wit that do feed atheism and irreligion, which have a false glittering in them, that dazzle some weak-sighted minds, who have not capacity enough to penetrate farther than the surfaces of things; and so they stick in these toils, which the strength of his mind would soon break through, if it were once freed from those things that depressed and darkened it.

At this pass he was when he went from London about the beginning of April: he had not been long in the country, when he thought he was so well, that, being to go to his estate in Somersetshire, he rode thither post. This heat and violent motion did so inflame an ulcer that was in his bladder, that it raised a very great pain in those parts; yet he, with much difficulty, came back by coach to the lodge at Woodstock Park. He was then wounded both in body and mind; he understood physic and his own constitution and distemper so well, that he concluded he could hardly recover; for the ulcer broke, and vast quantities of purulent matter passed with his urine. But now the hand of God touched him, and, as he told me, it was not only a general dark melancholy over his mind, such as he had formerly felt, but a most penetrating, cutting sorrow; so that, though in his body he suffered extreme pain for some weeks, yet

the agonies of his mind sometimes swallowed up the sense of what he felt in his body. He told me, and gave it me in charge to tell it to one for whom he was much concerned, that, though there were nothing to come after this life, yet all the pleasures he had ever known in sin were not worth that torture he had felt in his mind. He considered he had not only neglected and dishonoured, but had openly defied his Maker, and had drawn many others into the like impieties: so that he looked on himself as one that was in greater danger of being damned. He then set himself wholly to turn to God unfeignedly, and to do all that was possible, in that little remainder of his life which was before him, to redeem those great portions of it that he had formerly so ill employed. The minister that attended constantly on him, was that good and worthy man, Mr. Parsons, his mother's chaplain, who hath since his death preached, according to the directions he received from him, his funeral sermon; in which there are so many remarkable passages, that I shall refer my reader to them, and will repeat none of them here, that I may not thereby lessen his desire to edify himself by that excellent discourse, which hath given so great and so general a satisfaction to all good and judicious readers. I shall speak cursorily of every thing but that which I had immediately from himself. He was visited every week of his sickness by his diocesan, that truly primitive prelate, the Lord Bishop of Oxford; who, though he lived six miles from him, yet looked on this as so important a piece of his pastoral care, that

he went often to him, and treated him with that decent plainness and freedom which is so natural to him; and took care also that he might not, on terms more easy than safe, be at peace with himself. Dr. Marshall, the learned and worthy rector of Lincoln College in Oxford, being the minister of the parish, was also frequently with him; and by these helps he was so directed and supported, that he might not on the one hand satisfy himself with too superficial a repentance, nor on the other hand be out of measure oppressed with a sorrow without hope. As soon as I heard he was ill, but yet in such a condition that I might write to him, I wrote a letter to the best purpose I could. He ordered one, that was then with him, to assure me it was very welcome to him; but not satisfied with that, he sent me an answer, which, as the Countess of Rochester, his mother, told me, he dictated every word, and then signed it. I was once unwilling to have published it, because of a compliment in it to myself, far above my merit, and not very well suiting with his condition.

But the sense he expresses in it of the change then wrought on him, hath upon second thoughts prevailed with me to publish it, leaving out what concerns myself.

"Woodstock Park, Oxfordshire.

"My most honoured Dr. Burnet!

"My spirits and body decay so equally together that I shall write you a letter, as weak as I am in person. I begin to value churchmen above all men in

the world, &c. If God be yet pleased to spare me longer in this world, I hope in your conversation to be exalted to that degree of piety, that the world may see how much I abhor what I so long loved, and how much I glory in repentance and in God's service. Bestow your prayers upon me, that God would spare me, (if it be his good will,) to shew a true repentance and amendment of life for the time to come: or else, if the Lord pleaseth to put an end to my worldly being now, that he would mercifully accept of my death-bed repentance, and perform that promise that he hath been pleased to make, that, at what time soever a sinner doth repent, he would receive him. Put up these prayers, most dear doctor, to Almighty God, for

"Your most obedient,

"Languishing servant,

"ROCHESTER.

"*June* 25, 1680."

He told me, when I saw him, that he hoped I would come to him upon that general insinuation of the desire he had of my company; and he was loath to write more plainly, not knowing whether I could easily spare so much time. I told him, that, on the other hand, I looked on it as a presumption to come so far when he was in such excellent hands; and, though perhaps the freedom formerly between us might have excused it with those to whom it was known, yet it might have the appearance of so much vanity to such as were strangers to it; so that, till

I received his letter, I did not think it convenient to come to him; and then, not hearing that there was any danger of a sudden change, I delayed going to him till the twentieth of July. At my coming to his house, an accident fell out not worth mentioning, but that some have made a story of it. His servant, being a Frenchman, carried up my name wrong, so that he mistook it for another who had sent to him that he would undertake his cure, and he, being resolved not to meddle with him, did not care to see him: this mistake lasted some hours, with which I was the better contented, because he was not then in such a condition that my being about him could have been of any use to him; for that night was like to have been his last. He had a convulsion fit, and raved; but, opiates being given him, after some hours' rest, his raving left him so entirely, that it never again returned to him.

I cannot easily express the transport he was in when he awoke and saw me by him: he broke out in the tenderest expressions concerning my kindness in coming so far to see such an one, using terms of great abhorrence concerning himself which I forbear to relate. He told me, as his strength served him at several snatches, for he was then so low that he could not hold up discourse long at once, what sense he had of his past life; what sad apprehension for having so offended his Maker and dishonoured his Redeemer; what horrors he had gone through, and how much his mind was turned to call on God and on his crucified Saviour, so that he hoped he should obtain mercy; for

he believed he had sincerely repented, and had now a calm in his mind after that storm that he had been in for some weeks. He had strong apprehensions and persuasions of his admittance to heaven, of which he spake once, not without some extraordinary emotion. It was, indeed, the only time that he spake with any great warmth to me; for his spirits were then low, and so far spent, that, though those about him told me he had expressed formerly great fervour in his devotions, yet, nature was so much sunk, that these were in a great measure fallen off. But he made me pray often with him, and spoke of his conversion to God as a thing now grown up in him to a settled and calm serenity. He was very anxious to know my opinion of a death-bed repentance. I told him, that before I gave any resolution in that, it would be convenient that I should be acquainted more particularly with the circumstances and progress of his repentance.

Upon this he satisfied me in many particulars. He said he was now persuaded both of the truth of Christianity and of the power of inward grace, of which he gave me this strange account:—He said, Mr. Parsons, in order to his conviction, read to him the fifty-third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, and compared that with the history of our Saviour's passion, that he might there see a prophecy concerning it, written many ages before it was done; which the Jews, that blasphemed Jesus Christ, still kept in their hands, as a book divinely inspired. He said to me, that as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him, which

did so enlighten his mind and convince him, that he could resist it no longer; for the words had an authority which did shoot like rays or beams in his mind, so that he was not only convinced by the reasonings he had about it, which satisfied his understanding, but by a power which did so effectually constrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour as if he had seen him in the clouds. He had made it to be read so often to him, that he had got it by heart, and went through a great part of it, in discourse with me, with a sort of heavenly pleasure, giving me his reflections on it. Some few I remember. *Who hath believed our report?* (Ver. 1.) Here, he said, was foretold the opposition the Gospel was to meet with from such wretches as he was. *He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.* (Verse 2.) On this, he said, the meanness of his appearance and person has made vain and foolish people disparage him, because he came not in such a fool's coat as they delight in. What he said on the other parts I do not well remember; and indeed I was so affected with what he said then to me, that the general transport I was under during the whole discourse, made me less capable to remember these particulars as I wish I had done.

He told me, that he had thereupon received the sacrament with great satisfaction; and that was increased by the pleasure he had in his lady's receiving it with him, who had been for some years misled into the communion of the Church of Rome, and he

himself had been not a little instrumental in procuring it, as he freely acknowledged: so that it was one of the joyfullest things that befel him in his sickness, that he had seen that mischief removed in which he had so great a hand: and, during his whole sickness, he expressed so much tenderness and true kindness to his lady, that as it easily effaced the remembrance of every thing wherein he had been in fault formerly, so it drew from her the most passionate care and concern for him that was possible; which indeed deserves a higher character than is decent to give of a person yet alive. But I shall confine my discourse to the dead.

He told me he had overcome all his resentments to all the world, so that he bore ill-will to no person, nor hated any upon personal accounts. He had given a true state of his debts, and had ordered to pay them all, as far as his estate, that was not settled, could go; and was confident that, if all that was owing to him were paid to his executors, his creditors would be all satisfied. He said, he found his mind now possessed with another sense of things than ever he had formerly. He did not repine under all his pain, and, in one of the sharpest fits he was under while I was with him, he said, he did willingly submit; and, looking up to heaven, said, "God's holy will be done: I bless him for all he does to me." He professed, he was contented either to die or live, as should please God; and, though it was a foolish thing for a man to pretend to choose whether he would die or live, yet he wished rather to die. He

knew he could never be so well that life should be comfortable to him. He was confident he should be happy if he died; but he feared if he lived, he might relapse: "And then," said he to me, "in what a condition shall I be, if I relapse after all this!" But, he said, he trusted in the grace and goodness of God, and was resolved to avoid all those temptations, that course of life and company that were likely to ensnare him, and he desired to live on no other account, but that he might, by the change of his manners, some way take off the high scandal his former behaviour had given. All these things, at several times, I had from him, besides some messages, which very well became a dying penitent, to some of his former friends, and a charge to publish any thing concerning him that might be a mean to reclaim others, praying God, that, as his life had done much hurt, so his death might do some good.

Having understood all these things from him, and being pressed to give him my opinion plainly about his eternal state, I told him, that, though the promises of the Gospel did all depend upon a real change of heart and life, as the indispensable condition upon which they were made; and that it was scarcely possible to know certainly whether our hearts are changed, unless it appeared in our lives; and, the repentance of most dying men being like the howlings of condemned prisoners for pardon, which flowed from no sense of their crimes, but from the horror of approaching death, there was little reason to encourage any to hope much from such sorrowing; yet, certainly, if

the mind of a sinner, even on a death-bed, be truly renewed and turned to God, so great is his mercy, that he will receive him even in that extremity. He said, he was sure his mind was entirely turned; and, though horror had given him his first awaking, yet that was now grown up into a settled faith and conversion.

There is but one prejudice lies against all this, to defeat the good ends of Divine Providence by it upon others as well as on himself, and that is, that it was a part of his disease, and that the lowness of his spirits made such an alteration in him, that he was not what he had formerly been; and this some have carried so far as to say that he died mad. These reports are raised by those who are unwilling that the last thoughts or words of a person every way so extraordinary should have any effect either on themselves or others; and it is to be feared, that some have so far seared their consciences, and exceeded the common measures of sin and infidelity, that neither this testimony, nor one coming from the dead, would signify much towards their conviction. That this Lord was either mad or stupid is a thing so notoriously untrue, that it is the greatest impudence for any that were about him to report it, and a very unreasonable credulity in others to believe it. All the while I was with him, after he had slept out the disorders of the fit he was in the first night, he was not only without ravings, but had a clearness in his thoughts, in his memory, in his reflections on things and persons, far beyond what I ever saw in a person so low in his

strength. He was not able to hold out long in a discourse, for his spirits failed; but once for half an hour, and often for a quarter of an hour, after he awaked, he had a vivacity in his discourse that was extraordinary, and in all things like himself. He called often for his children, his son, (afterwards Earl of Rochester,) and his three daughters, and spake to them with a sense and feeling that cannot be expressed in writing. He called me once to look on them all, and said, "See how good God has been to me, in giving so many blessings, and I have carried myself to him like an ungracious and unthankful dog." He once talked a great deal to me of public affairs, and of many persons and things, with the same clearness of thought and expression that he had ever done before: so that by no sign but his weakness of body, and giving over discourse so soon, could I perceive a difference between what his parts formerly were and what they were then.

And that, wherein the presence of his mind appeared most, was in the total change of an ill habit grown so much upon him, that he could hardly govern himself, when he was any ways heated, three minutes without falling into it: I mean swearing. He had acknowledged to me the former winter that he abhorred it as a base and indecent thing, and had set himself much to break it off; but he confessed, that he was so overpowered by that ill custom, that he could not speak with any warmth without repeated oaths, which, upon any sort of provocation, came almost naturally from him; but in his last remorses this did so sensibly affect him, that, by

a resolute and constant watchfulness, the habit of it was perfectly mastered: so that, upon the returns of pain, which were very severe and frequent upon him the last day I was with him, or upon such displeasures as people sick or in pain are apt to take on a sudden at those about them, on all these occasions he never swore an oath all the while I was there.

Once he was offended with the delay of one he thought made not haste enough with somewhat he called for, and said, in a little heat, "That damned fellow:" soon after I told him, I was glad to find his style so reformed, and that he had so entirely overcome that ill habit of swearing: only that word of calling any damned, which had returned upon him, was not decent. His answer was: "Oh! that language of friends, which was so familiar to me, hangs yet about me: sure none has deserved more to be damned than I have done." And, after he had humbly asked God pardon for it, he desired me to call the person to him, that he might ask him forgiveness: but I told him, that was needless; for he had said it of one that did not hear it and so could not be offended by it.

In this disposition of mind did he continue all the while I was with him, four days together: he was then brought so low, that all hopes of recovery were gone. Much purulent matter came from him with his urine, which he passed always with some pain, but one day with inexpressible torment: yet he bore it decently, without breaking out into repinings or impatient complaints. He imagined he had a stone in his passage; but it being searched, none was found.

The whole substance of his body was drained by the ulcer, and nothing was left but skin and bone; and, by lying much on his back, the parts there began to mortify: but he had been formerly so low, that he seemed as much past all hopes of life as now; which made him one morning, after a full and sweet night's rest, procured by laudanum given him without his knowledge, to fancy it was an effort of nature, and to begin to entertain some hopes of recovery: for he said he felt himself perfectly well, and that he had nothing ailing him but an extreme weakness, which might go off in time; and then he entertained me with the scheme he had laid down for the rest of his life; how retired, how strict and how studious he intended to be: but this was soon over; for he quickly felt that it was only the effect of a good sleep, and that he was still in a very desperate state.

I thought to have left him on Friday; but, not without some passion, he desired me to stay that day. There appeared no symptom of present death: and a worthy physician, then with him, told me, that, though he was so low, that an accident might carry him away on a sudden, yet, without that, he thought he might live yet some weeks. So, on Saturday, at four o'clock in the morning, I left him, being the 24th of July. But I durst not take leave of him; for he had expressed so great an unwillingness to part with me the day before, that, if I had not presently yielded to one day's stay, it was like to have given him some trouble, therefore I thought it better

to leave him without any formality. Some hours after, he asked for me; and when it was told him that I was gone, he seemed to be troubled, and said, "Has my friend left me? Then I shall die shortly." After that he spake but once or twice till he died: he lay much silent: once they heard him praying very devoutly. And on Monday, about two of the clock in the morning, he died without any convulsion, or so much as a groan.

THE CONCLUSION.

Thus he lived, and thus he died in the three-and-thirtieth year of his age. Nature had fitted him for great things, and his knowledge and observation qualified him to have been one of the most extraordinary men, not only of his nation, but of the age he lived in; and I do verily believe, that, if God had thought fit to have continued him longer in the world, he had been the wonder and delight of all that knew him: but the infinitely wise God knew better what was fit for him, and what the age deserved; for men, who have so cast off all sense of God and religion, deserve not so signal a blessing as the example and conviction which the rest of his life might have given them. And I am apt to think that the Divine Goodness took pity on him; and, seeing the sincerity of his repentance, would try and venture him no more in circumstances of temptation,

perhaps too hard for human frailty. Now he is at rest; and, I am very confident, enjoys the fruits of his late, but sincere repentance. But such as live, and still go on in their sins and impieties, and will not be awakened, neither by this nor the other alarms that are about their ears, are, it seems, given up by God to a judicial hardness and impenitency.

Here is a public instance of one who lived of their side, but could not die of it: and, though none of all our libertines understood better than he the secret mysteries of sin, had more studied every thing that could support a man in it, and had more resisted all external means of conviction than he had done; yet, when the hand of God inwardly touched him, he could no longer kick against those pricks, but humbled himself under that mighty hand, and, as he used often to say in his prayers, he, who had so often denied him, found then no other shelter but his mercies and compassions.

I have written this account with all the tenderness and caution I could use; and, in whatsoever I may have failed, I have been strict in the truth of what I have related, remembering that of Job, "Will ye lie for God?" Religion has strength and evidence enough in itself, and needs no support from lies and made stories. I do not pretend to have given the formal words that he said, though I have done that where I could remember them. But I have written this with the same sincerity that I would have done had I known I had been to die immediately after I had finished it. I did not take notes of our dis-

courses last winter after we parted; so I may perhaps, in the setting out of my answers to him, have enlarged on several things both more fully, and more regularly, than I could say them in such free discourses as we had. I am not so sure of all I set down, as said by me, as I am of all said by him to me; but yet the substance of the greatest part, even of that, is the same.

It remains, that I humbly and earnestly beseech all that shall take this book in their hands, that they will consider it entirely, and not wrest some parts to an ill intention. God, the searcher of hearts, knows with what fidelity I have writ it: but, if any will drink up only the poison that may be in it, without taking also the antidote here given to those ill principles; or considering the sense that this great person had of them, when he reflected seriously on them; and will rather confirm themselves in their ill ways by the scruples and objections which I set down, than be edified by the other parts of it; as I shall look on it as a great infelicity that I should have said any thing that may strengthen them in their impieties, so the sincerity of my intentions will, I doubt not, excuse me at his hands, to whom I offer up this small service.

I have now performed, in the best manner I could, what was left on me by this noble Lord, and have done with the part of an historian. I shall in the next place say somewhat as a divine. So extraordinary a text does almost force a sermon, though it is plain enough itself, and speaks with so loud a

voice, that those who are not awakened by it will perhaps consider nothing that I can say. If our libertines will become so far sober as to examine their former course of life with that disengagement and impartiality which they must acknowledge a wise man ought to use in things of greatest consequence, and balance the account of what they have got by their debaucheries with the mischiefs they have brought on themselves and others by them, they will soon see what a bad bargain they have made. Some diversion, mirth and pleasure, is all they can promise themselves; but to obtain this, how many evils are they to suffer! How have many wasted their strength, brought many diseases on their bodies, and precipitated their age in the pursuit of those things! And as they bring old age early on themselves, so it becomes a miserable state of life to the greatest part of them; gouts, stranguries, and other infirmities, being severe reckonings for their past follies; not to mention the more loathsome diseases, with their no less loathsome and troublesome cures, which they must often go through, who deliver themselves up to forbidden pleasures. Many are disfigured beside with the marks of their intemperance and lewdness; and, which is yet sadder, an infection is derived oftentimes on their innocent but unhappy issue, who being descended from so vitiated an original, suffer for their excesses. Their fortunes are profusely wasted, both by their neglect of their affairs, they being so buried in vice, that they cannot employ either their time or spirits, so much ex-

hausted by intemperance, to consider them; and by that prodigal expense which their lusts put them upon. They suffer no less in their credit, the chief mean to recover an entangled estate: for that irregular expense forces them to so many mean shifts, makes them so often false to all their promises and resolutions, that they must needs feel how much they have lost that, which a gentleman, and men of ingenuous tempers, do sometimes prefer even to life itself,—their honour and reputation. Nor do they suffer less in the noble powers of their minds, which, by a long course of such dissolute practices, come to sink and degenerate so far, that not a few, whose first blossoms gave the most promising hopes, have so withered, as to become incapable of great and generous undertakings, and to be disabled to every thing, but to wallow like swine in the filth of sensuality, their spirits being dissipated, and their minds so benumbed, as to be wholly unfit for business, and even indisposed to think.

That this dear price should be paid for a little wild mirth, or gross and corporal pleasure, is a thing of such unparalleled folly, that, if there were not too many such instances before us, it might seem incredible. To all this we must add, the horrors that their ill actions raise in them, and the hard shifts they are put to, to stave off these, either by being perpetually drunk or mad, or by an habitual disuse of thinking and reflecting on their actions, and (if these arts will not perfectly quiet them) by taking sanctuary in such atheistical principles as may at

least mitigate the sourness of their thoughts, though they cannot absolutely settle their minds.

If the state of mankind and human societies is considered, what mischiefs can be equal to those which follow these courses? Such persons are a plague wherever they come; they can neither be trusted nor beloved, having cast off both truth and goodness, which procure confidence and attract love: they corrupt some by their ill practices, and do irreparable injuries to the rest; they run great hazards, and put themselves to much trouble, and all this to do what is in their power to make damnation as sure to themselves as possibly they can. What influence this has on the whole nation, is but too visible; how the bonds of nature, wedlock, and all other relations are quite broken: virtue is thought an antique piece of formality, and religion the effect of cowardice or knavery. These are the men that would reform the world, by bringing it under a new system of intellectual and moral principles; but, bate them a few bold and lewd jests, what have they ever done, or designed to do, to make them to be remembered, except it be with detestation? They are the scorn of the present age, and their names must rot in the next. Here they have before them an instance of one, who was deeply corrupted with the contagion, which he first derived from others, but unhappily heightened it much himself.—He was a master, indeed, and not a bare trifler with wit, as some of those are who repeat, and that but scurvily, what they may have heard from him or some others,

and with impudence and laughter will face the world down, as if they were to teach it wisdom; who, God knows, cannot follow one thought a step farther than as they have conned it; and take from them their borrowed wit and mimical humour, and they will presently appear, what they indeed are, the least and lowest of men.

If they will, or if they can, think a little, I wish they would consider, that, by their own principles, they cannot be sure that religion is only a contrivance: all they pretend to is only to weaken some arguments that are brought for it; but they have not brow enough to say, they can prove that their own principles are true, so that at most they bring their cause no higher than that it is possible religion may not be true. But still it is possible it may be true, and they have no shame left that will deny that it is also probable it may be true; and, if so, then what mad men are they who run so great a hazard for nothing? By their own confession, it may be there is a God, a judgment, and a life to come; and, if so, then he that believes these things, and lives according to them, as he enjoys a long course of health and quiet of mind, an innocent relish of many true pleasures, and the serenities which virtue raises in him, with the good-will and friendship which it procures him from others; so when he dies, if these things prove mistakes, he does not outlive his error, nor shall it afterwards raise trouble or disquiet in him, if he then ceases to be; but, if these things be true, he shall be infinitely

happy in that state, where his present small services shall be so excessively rewarded. The libertines, on the other side, as they know they must die, so the thoughts of death must be always melancholy to them: they can have no pleasant view of that which yet they know cannot be very far from them; the least painful idea they can have of it is, that it is an extinction and ceasing to be; but they are not sure even of that: some secret whispers within make them, whether they will or not, tremble at the apprehensions of another state: neither their tinsel-wit nor superficial learning, nor their impotent assaults upon the weak side, as they think, of religion, nor the boldest notions of impiety, will hold them up then. Of all which I now present so lively an instance, as perhaps history can scarce parallel.

Here were parts so exalted by nature, and improved by study, and yet so corrupted and debased by irreligion and vice, that he, who was made to be one of the glories of his age, was become a proverb, and if his repentance had not interposed, would have been one of the greatest reproaches of it. He knew well the small strength of that weak cause, and at first despised, but afterwards abhorred it. He felt the mischiefs, and saw the madness of it; and, therefore, though he lived to the scandal of many, he died as much to the edification of all those who saw him: and, because they were but a small number, he desired that he might even when dead yet speak. He was willing nothing should be con-

cealed that might cast reproach on himself and on sin, and offer up glory to God and religion. So that, though he lived a heinous sinner, yet he died a most exemplary penitent.

It would be a vain and ridiculous inference for any from hence to draw arguments about the abstruse secrets of predestination, and to conclude, that, if they are of the number of the elect, they may live as they will, and that Divine Grace will at some time or other violently constrain them, and irresistibly work upon them." But as St. Paul was called to that eminent service, for which he was appointed, in so stupendous a manner as is no warrant for others to expect such a vocation; so, if upon some signal occasions such conversions fall out, which, how far they are short of miracles, I shall not determine, it is not only a vain but a pernicious imagination, for any to go on in their ill ways upon a fond conceit and expectation that the like will befal them: for whatsoever God's extraordinary dealings with some may be, we are sure his common way of working is by offering these things to our rational faculties, which, by the assistances of his grace, if we improve them all we can, shall be certainly effectual for our reformation; and, if we neglect or abuse these, we put ourselves beyond the common methods of God's mercy, and have no reason to expect that wonders should be wrought for our conviction; which, though they sometimes happen, that they may give an effectual alarm for the awaking of others, yet it

would destroy the whole design of religion, if men should depend upon or look for such an extraordinary and forcible operation of God's grace.

And I hope that those who have had some sharp reflections on their past life, so as to be resolved to forsake their ill courses, will not take the least encouragement to themselves in that desperate and unreasonable resolution of putting off their repentance till they can sin no longer, from the hopes I have expressed of this Lord's obtaining mercy at the last, and from thence presume, that they also shall be received when they turn to God on their death-beds: for, what mercy soever God may shew to such as really were never inwardly touched before that time, yet there is no reason to think, that those who have dealt so disingenuously with God and their own souls, as designedly to put off their turning to him upon such considerations, should then be accepted with him. They may die suddenly, or by a disease that may so disorder their understandings, that they shall not be in any capacity of reflecting on their past lives. The inward conversion of our minds is not so in our power that it can be effected without divine grace assisting; and there is no reason for those who have neglected these assistances all their lives, to expect them in so extraordinary a manner at their death. Nor can one, especially in a sickness that is quick and critical, be able to do those things that are often indispensably necessary to make his repentance complete; and even in a longer disease, in which there are larger opportunities for these

things. Yet there is great reason to doubt of a repentance, begun and kept up merely by terror, and not from any ingenuous principle. In which, though I will not take on me to limit the mercies of God, which are boundless, yet this must be confessed, that to delay repentance with such a design, is to put the greatest concernment we have upon the most dangerous and desperate issue that is possible.

But they that will still go on in their sins, and be so partial to them as to use all endeavours to strengthen themselves in their evil course, even by these very things which the providence of God sets before them for the casting down of these strong holds of sin,—what is to be said to such? It is to be feared, that, if they obstinately persist, they will by degrees come within that curse, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still. But, if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

A SERMON

PREACHED

AT THE FUNERAL OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

John Earl of Rochester,

Who died at Woodstock Park, the 26th of July, 1680,

AND WAS BURIED AT SPILSBURY, IN OXFORDSHIRE, THE 9TH DAY OF AUGUST.

BY ROBERT PARSONS, M.A.

CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ANNE,
COUNTESS OF ROCHESTER.

25388

A SERMON.

LUKE xv. 7;

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

IF ever there were a subject that might deserve and exhaust all the treasures of religious eloquence in the description of so great a man, and so great a sinner, as now lies before us; together with the wonders of the Divine Goodness, in making him as great a penitent; I think the present occasion affords one as remarkable as any place or age can produce.

Indeed, so great and full a matter it is, that it is too big to come out of my mouth, and perhaps not all of it fit or needful so to do. The greatness of his parts are well enough known, and of his sins too well in the world; and neither my capacity, nor experience, nor my profession, will allow me to be so proper a judge either of the one or the other. Only as God has been pleased to make me a long while a sad spectator and a secret mourner for his sins, so has he at last graciously heard the prayers of his nearest relations and true friends for his conversion and repentance: and it is the good tidings of that espe-

cially, which God has done for his soul, that I am now to publish and tell abroad to the world, not only by the obligations of mine office, in which I had the honour to be a weak minister to it, but by his own express and dying commands.

Now, although to describe this worthily would require a wit equal to that with which he lived, and a devotion too, equal to that with which he died, and to match either would be a very hard task, yet, besides that I am not sufficient for these things (for who is?), and that my thoughts have been rather privately busied to secure a real repentance to himself whilst living, than to publish it abroad to others in an artificial dress after he is dead; I say, besides all this, I think I shall have less need to call in the aids of secular eloquence. The proper habit of repentance is not fine linen, or any delicate array, such as are used in the court, or kings' houses, but sackcloth and ashes: and the way, which God Almighty takes to convey it, is not by the words of man's wisdom, but by the plainness of his written word, assisted by the inward power and demonstration of the Spirit: and the effects it works, and by which it discovers itself, are not any raptures of wit and fancy, but the most humble prostrations both of soul and spirit, and the captivating all human imaginations to the obedience of a despised religion and a crucified Saviour.

And it is in this array I intend to bring out this penitent to you; an array which I am sure he more valued, and desired to appear in, both to God and the world, than in all the triumphs of wit and gallantry

and, therefore, (waving all these rhetorical flourishes, as beneath the solemnity of the occasion, and the majesty of that great and weighty truth I am now to deliver,) I shall content myself with the office of a plain historian, to relate faithfully and impartially what I saw and heard, especially during his penitential sorrows; which, if all that hear me this day had been spectators of, there would then have been no need of a sermon to convince them; but every man would have been as much a preacher to himself of this truth as I am, except these sorrows: and yet even these sorrows should be turned into joys, too, if we would only do what we pray for,—that the will of God may be done in earth as it is in heaven; for so our blessed Lord assures us: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," &c. From which I shall consider,

I. The sinner particularly that is before us.

II. The repentance of this sinner, together with the means, the time, and all probable sincerity of it.

III. The joy that is in heaven, and should be on earth, for the repentance of this sinner.

IV. I shall apply myself to all that hear me; that they would join in this joy, in praise and thanksgiving to God, for the conversion of this sinner; and, if there be any that have been like him in their sins, that they would also speedily imitate him in their repentance.

And, I. Let us consider the person before us, as he certainly was a great sinner. But, because man was upright before he was a sinner, and to measure the

greatness of his fall it will be necessary to take a view of that height from which he fell, give me leave to go back a little, to look into the rock from which he was hewn, the quality, family, education, and personal accomplishments of this great man. In doing of which, I think no man will charge me with any design of customary flattery or formality; since I intend only thereby to shew the greatness and unhappiness of his folly, in the perverting so many excellent abilities and advantages for virtue and piety in the service of sin, and so becoming a more universal, insinuating, and prevailing example of it.

As for his family, on both sides, from which he was descended, they were some of the most famous in their generations. His grandfather was that excellent and truly great man, Charles Lord Wilmot, Viscount Athlone in Ireland. Henry, his father, who inherited the same title and greatness, was by his late Majesty, King Charles I., created Baron of Adderbury, in Oxfordshire, and by his present Majesty, Earl of Rochester. He was a man of signal loyalty and integrity indeed; and of such courage and conduct in military affairs as became a great general. His mother was the relict of Sir Francis Henry Lee, of Ditchly, in the county of Oxford, baronet, grandmother to the present Right Honourable Earl of Litchfield, and the daughter of that generous and honourable gentleman, Sir John St. Johns, of Lyddiard, in the county of Wilts, baronet, whose family was so remarkable for loyalty, that several of his sons willingly offered themselves in the day of battle, and died for it; and

whilst the memory of the English or Irish rebellion lasts, that family cannot want a due veneration in the minds of any person that loves either God or the king.

As for his education, it was in Wadham College, Oxford, under the care of that wise and excellent governor, Dr. Blandford, the late Bishop of Worcester; there it was that he laid a good foundation of learning and study, though he afterwards built upon that foundation hay and stubble. There he first sucked from the breast of his mother, the university, those perfections of wit, and eloquence, and poetry, which afterwards, by his own corrupt stomach, were turned into poison to himself and others; which certainly can be no more a blemish to those illustrious seminaries of piety and good learning, than a disobedient child is to a wise and virtuous father, or the fall of man to the excellency of paradise.

A wit he had so rare and fruitful in its invention, and withal so choice and delicate in its judgment, that there is nothing wanting in his composures to give a full answer to that question, What and where wit is; except the purity and choice of subject. For, had such excellent seeds but fallen upon good ground, and, instead of pitching upon a beast or a lust, been raised up on high, to celebrate the mysteries of the Divine love, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, I persuade myself we might by this time have received from his pen as excellent an idea of divine poetry, under the Gospel, useful to the teaching of virtue, especially in this generation, as his profane

verses have been to destroy it. And I am confident, had God spared him a longer life, this would have been the whole business of it, as I know it was the vow and purpose of his sickness.

His natural talent was excellent; but he had hugely improved it by learning and industry, being thoroughly acquainted with all the classic authors both Greek and Latin; a thing very rare, if not peculiar to him, among those of his quality: which yet he used not, as other poets have done, to translate or steal from them; but rather to better and improve them by his own natural fancy. And whoever reads his composures will find all things in them so peculiarly great, new, and excellent, that he will easily pronounce that, though he has lent to many others, yet he has borrowed of none; and that he has been as far from a sordid imitation of those before him, as he will be from being reached by those that follow him.

His other personal accomplishments in all the perfections of a gentleman, for the court or country, whereof he was known of all men to be a very great master, it is no part of my business to describe or understand; and whatever they were in themselves, I am sure they were but miserable comforters to him, since they only ministered to his sins, and made his example the more fatal and dangerous; for so we may own (nay, I am obliged by him not to hide, but to shew the rocks which others may avoid,) that he was once one of the greatest of sinners.

And truly none but one so great in parts could be

so. His sins were like his parts, from which they sprang, all of them high and extraordinary. He seemed to affect something singular and paradoxical in his impieties as well as in his writings, above the reach and thought of other men; taking as much pains to draw others in, and to pervert the right ways of virtue, as the apostles and primitive saints did to save their own souls and them that heard them. For this was the heightening and amazing circumstance of his sins, that he was so diligent and industrious to recommend and propagate them; not like those of old that hated the light, but those the prophet mentions, Isaiah iii. 9, "who declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not; that take it upon their shoulders, and bind it to them as a crown;" framing arguments for sin, making proselytes to it, and writing panegyrics upon vice.

Nay, so confirmed was he in sin, that he oftentimes almost died a martyr for it. God was pleased sometimes to punish him with the effects of his folly; yet, till now, (he confessed,) they had no power to melt him into true repentance: or if at any time he had some lucid intervals from his folly and madness, yet, alas! how short and transitory were they! All that goodness was but as a morning cloud, and as the early dew that vanishes away: he still returned to the same excess of riot; and that with so much the more greediness, the longer he had fasted from it.

And yet, even this desperate sinner, that one would think had made a covenant with death, and was at an agreement with hell, and just upon the

brink of them both, God, to magnify the riches of his grace and mercy, was pleased to snatch as a brand out of the fire: as St. Paul, though "before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, yet obtained mercy, that in him Christ Jesus might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him, to everlasting life." 1 Tim. i. 13, 16. So God struck him to the ground, as it were by a light from heaven, and a voice of thunder round about him; insomuch that now the scales fell from his eyes, as they did from St Paul's; his stony heart was opened, and streams of tears gushed out, the bitter but wholesome tears of true repentance.

And, that this may appear to be so, I think it necessary to account for these two things.

1. For the means of it; that it was not barely the effect of sickness, or the fear of death; but the hand of God also working in them and by them manifestly.

2. For the sincerity of it; which though none but God that sees the heart can tell certainly, yet man even also may and ought to believe it; not only in the judgment of charity, but of moral justice, from all evident signs of it, which were possible to be given by one in his condition.

And 1st, For the means or method of his repentance. That which prepared the way for it was a sharp and painful sickness, with which God was pleased to visit him; the way which the Almighty often takes to reduce the wandering sinner to the knowledge of God and himself. "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion unto the house of Judah; I, even

I, will tear and go away, and none shall relieve him; I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face, and in their affliction they will seek me early." Hosea v. 14, 15.

And, though to forsake our sins then, when we can no longer enjoy them, seems to be rather the effect of impotency and necessity than of choice, and so not so acceptable or praiseworthy, yet we find God Almighty often uses the one to bring about the other, and improves a forced abstinence from sin into a settled loathing and a true detestation of it.

It is true, there are such stubborn natures, that, like clay, are rather hardened by the fire of afflictions: ungracious children, that fly in the face of their heavenly Father in the very instant when he is correcting them; or it may be like those children who promise wonders then, but presently after forget all. Such as these we have described Psalm lxxvii. 34—37: "When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God; then they remembered that God was their rock, and that the high God was their Redeemer; nevertheless, they did but flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither continued they steadfast in his covenant." And it is probable this has been the case formerly of this person. But there was an evident difference betwixt the effects of this sickness upon him and many others before. He had other sentiments of things now, (he told me,) and acted upon quite different principles: he was not vexed with it

as it was painful, or hindered him from his sins, which he would have rolled under his tongue all the while, and longed again to be at; but he submitted patiently to it, accepting it as the hand of God, and was thankful, blessing and praising God not only in but for his extremities. There was now no cursing, no railing or reproaches to his servants or those about him, which in other sicknesses were their usual entertainment; but he treated them with all the meekness and patience in the world, begging pardon frequently of the meanest of them but for a hasty word, which the extremity of his sickness, and the sharpness of his pain, might easily force from him. His prayers were not so much for ease or health, or a continuance in life, as for grace and faith, and perfect resignation to the will of God. So that I think we may not only charitably but justly conclude, that his sickness was not the chief ingredient, but, through the grace of God, an effectual means of a true though late repentance, as will best be judged by the marks I am now to give you of the sincerity of it: for which I am, in the next place, to account.

II. And it was the power of divine grace, and of that only, that broke through all those obstacles that usually attend a man in his circumstances; that God (who is a God of infinite compassion and forbearance) allowed him leisure and opportunity for repentance; that he awakened him from his spiritual slumber by a pungent sickness; that he gave him such a presence of mind, as both to provide prudently for his worldly affairs, and yet not to be distracted or diverted by

them from the thoughts of a better world; that lengthened out his day of grace, and accompanied the ordinary means of salvation, and weak ministry of his word, with the convincing and overruling power of his Spirit to his conscience; which word of God came to him quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of his soul and spirit; and at last the Spirit of God witnessed to his spirit that now he was become one of the children of God.

Now, if the thief upon the cross (an instance too much abused) was therefore accepted, because accompanied with all the effects of a sincere convert which his condition was capable of; as confession of Christ's divinity in the midst of the blasphemies of Pharisees and his own lewd companion, and desertion of even Christ's disciples; if his repentance be therefore judged real, because he seems to be more concerned in the remembrance of Christ's future kingdom than his own death; if St. Paul was approved by the same more abundant labours which he commended in the Corinthians; "Yea, what zeal, what fear, what vehement desire!" 2 Cor. vii. 11; I think I shall make it appear, that the repentance of this person was accompanied with the like hopeful symptoms; and I am so sensible of that awful presence both of God and man, before whom I speak, who are easily able to discover my failings, that I shall not deliver any thing but what I know to be a strict and religious truth.

Upon my first visit to him (May 26, just at his re-

turn from his journey out of the West) he most gladly received me, shewed me extraordinary respect upon the score of mine office, thanked God, who had in mercy and good providence sent me to him who so much needed my prayers and counsels; and acknowledged how unworthily heretofore he had treated that order of men, reproaching them that they were proud, and prophesied only for rewards; but now he had learned how to value them; that he esteemed them the servants of the most high God, who were to shew to him the way of everlasting life.

At the same time I found him labouring under strange trouble and conflicts of mind, his spirit wounded, and his conscience full of terrors. Upon his journey, he told me, he had been arguing with greater vigour against God and religion than ever he had done in his lifetime before, and that he was resolved to run them down with all the argument and spite in the world; but, like the great convert St. Paul, he found it hard to kick against the pricks for God, at that time had so struck his heart by his immediate hand, that presently he argued as strongly for God and virtue as before he had done against it that God strangely opened his heart, creating in him mind most awful and tremendous thoughts and ideas of the Divine Majesty, with a delightful contemplation of the Divine nature and attributes, and of the loveliness of religion and virtue. I never (said he) was advanced thus far towards happiness in my life before though, upon the commission of some sins extraordinary, I have had some checks and warnings con-

siderable from within, but still struggled with them, and so wore them off again. The most observable that I remember was this: one day, at an atheistical meeting at a person of quality's, I undertook to manage the cause, and was the principal disputant against God and piety, and for my performances received the applause of the whole company; upon which my mind was terribly struck, and I immediately replied thus to myself:—Good God! that a man that walks upright, that sees the wonderful works of God, and has the use of his senses and reason, should use them to the defying of his Creator! But, though this was a good beginning towards my conversion, to find my conscience touched for my sins, yet it went off again; nay all my life long I had a secret value and reverence for an honest man, and loved morality in others. But I had formed an odd scheme of religion to myself, which would solve all that God or conscience might force upon me; yet I was not ever well reconciled to the business of Christianity, nor had that reverence for the Gospel of Christ as I ought to have. Which estate of mind continued till the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was read to him, (wherein there is a lively description of the sufferings of our Saviour, and the benefits thereof,) and some other portions of Scripture; by the power and efficacy of which word, assisted by his Holy Spirit, God so wrought upon his heart, that he declared that the mysteries of the passion appeared as clear and plain to him as ever any thing did that was represented in a glass, so that that joy and admiration which possessed his soul upon

the reading of God's word to him, was remarkable to all about him: and he had so much delight in his testimonies, that, in my absence, he begged his mother and lady to read the same to him frequently, and was unsatisfied (notwithstanding his great pain and weakness) till he had learned the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah without book.

At the same time, discoursing of his manner of life from his youth up, and which all men knew was too much devoted to the service of sin, and that the lusts of the flesh, of the eye, and the pride of life, had captivated him; he was very large and particular in his acknowledgments about it, more ready to accuse himself than I or any one else can be; publicly crying out, "O blessed God, can such a horrid creature as I am be accepted by thee, who has denied thy being, and contemned thy power?" Asking often, "Can there be mercy and pardon for me? Will God own such a wretch as I?" And in the middle of his sickness said, "Shall the unspeakable joys of heaven be conferred on me? O mighty Saviour! never, but through thine infinite love and satisfaction! O never, but by the purchase of thy blood!" Adding, that, with all abhorrency he did reflect upon his former life; that sincerely, and from his heart, he did repent of all that folly and madness which he had committed.

Indeed, he had a true and lively sense of God's great mercy to him, in striking his hard heart, and laying his conscience open, which hitherto was deaf to all God's calls and methods: saying, if that God,

who died for great as well as less sinners, did not speedily apply his infinite merits to his poor soul, his wound was such as no man could conceive or bear; crying out, that he was the vilest wretch and dog that the sun shined upon or the earth bore; that he now saw his error, in not living up to that reason which God endued him with, and which he unworthily vilified and contemned; wished he had been a starving leper crawling in a ditch, that he had been a link-boy or a beggar, or for his whole life confined to a dungeon, rather than thus to have sinned against God.

How remarkable was his faith, in a hearty embracing and devout confession of all the articles of our Christian religion, and all the divine mysteries of the Gospel! Saying, that that absurd and foolish philosophy, which the world so much admired, propagated by the late Mr. Hobbes and others, had undone him and many more of the best parts in the nation; who, without God's great mercy to them, may never, I believe, attain to such a repentance.

I must not omit to mention his faithful adherence to, and casting himself entirely upon the mercies of Jesus Christ, and the free grace of God, declared to repenting sinners through him; with a thankful remembrance of his life, death, and resurrection; begging God to strengthen his faith, and often crying out, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

His mighty love and esteem of the Holy Scriptures, his resolutions to read them frequently and meditate

upon them, if God should spare him, having already tasted the good word; for, having spoken to his heart, he acknowledged all the seeming absurdities and contradictions thereof, fancied by men of corrupt and reprobate judgments, were vanished, and the excellency and beauty appeared, being come to receive the truth in the love of it.

His extraordinary fervent devotions, in his frequent prayers of his own, most excellent and correct; amongst the rest, for the king, in such a manner as became a dutiful subject and a truly grateful servant; for the church and nation, for some particular relations, and then for all men; his calling frequently upon me at all hours to pray with him or read the Scriptures to him; and, toward the end of his sickness, he would heartily desire God to pardon his infirmities, if he should not be so wakeful and intent through the whole duty as he wished to be; and that, though the flesh was weak, yet the spirit was willing, and he hoped God would accept that.

His continual invocation of God's grace and Holy Spirit, to sustain him, to keep him from all evil thoughts, from all temptations and diabolical suggestions, and every thing which might be prejudicial to that religious temper of mind which God had now so happily endued him withal; crying out, one night especially, how terribly the tempter did assault him, by casting upon him lewd and wicked imaginations! "But I thank God," said he, "I abhor them all: by the power of his grace, which I am sure is sufficient for me,

I have overcome them: it is the malice of the devil, because I am rescued from him; and the goodness of God, that frees me from all my spiritual enemies."

His great joy at his lady's conversion from Popery to the Church of England, (being, as he termed it, a faction supported only by fraud and cruelty,) which was by her done with deliberation and mature judgment; the dark mists of which had for some months before been breaking away, but now cleared by her receiving the blessed sacrament with her dying husband, at the receiving of which no man could express more joy and devotion than he did; and, having handled the word of life, and seen the salvation of God in the preparation of his mind, he was now ready to depart in peace.

His hearty concern for the pious education of his children, wishing that his son might never be a wit, that is, (as he himself explained it,) one of those wretched creatures who pride themselves in abusing God and religion, denying his being or his providence; but that he might become an honest and religious man, which could only be the support and blessing of his family, complaining what a vicious and naughty world they were brought into, and that no fortunes or honours were comparable to the love and favour of God to them, in whose name he blessed them, prayed for them, and committed them to his protection.

His strict charge to those persons in whose custody his papers were, to burn all his profane and lewd writings, as being only fit to promote vice and im-

morality, by which he had so highly offended God, and shamed and blasphemed that holy religion into which he had been baptised; and all his obscene and filthy pictures, which were so notoriously scandalous.

His readiness to make restitution, to the utmost of his power, to all persons whom he had injured; and, for those whom he could not make a compensation to, he prayed for God's and their pardons. His remarkable justice in taking all possible care for the payment of his debts, which before he confessed he had not so fairly and effectually done.

His readiness to forgive all injuries done against him; some, more particularly mentioned, which were great and provoking; nay, annexing thereto all the assurance of a future friendship, and hoping he should be as freely forgiven at the hand of God.

How tender and concerned was he for his servants about him in his extremities, (manifested by the beneficence of his will to them,) pitying their troubles in watching with him and attending him, treating them with candour and kindness, as if they had been his intimates!

How hearty were his endeavours to be serviceable to those about him, exhorting them to the fear and love of God, and to make a good use of his forbearance and long-suffering to sinners, which should lead them to repentance! And here I must not pass by his pious and most passionate exclamation to a gentleman of some character, who came to visit him upon his death-bed: "O remember that you contemn God no more! he is an avenging God, and will visit

you for your sins: he will, in mercy, I hope, touch your conscience, sooner or later, as he has done mine. You and I have been friends and sinners together a great while, therefore I am the more free with you. We have been all mistaken in our conceits and opinions; our persuasions have been false and groundless; therefore God grant you repentance." And, seeing him the next day again, he said to him, "Perhaps you were disobliged by my plainness to you yesterday: I spake the words of truth and soberness to you; and (striking his hand upon his breast) I hope God will touch your heart."

Likewise his commands to me, to preach abroad, and to let all men know (if they knew it not already) how severely God had disciplined him for his sins by his afflicting hand; that his sufferings were most just though he had laid ten thousand times more upon him; how he had laid one stripe upon another, because of his grievous provocations, till he had brought him home to himself; that, in his former visitations, he had not that blessed effect he was now sensible of. He had formerly some loose thoughts and slight resolutions of reforming, and designed to be better, because even the present consequences of sin were still pestering him, and were so troublesome and inconvenient to him; but that now he had other sentiments of things, and acted upon other principles.

His willingness to die, if it pleased God, resigning himself always to the Divine disposal; but, if God should spare him yet a longer time here, he hoped to bring glory to the name of God in the whole

course of his life, and particularly by his endeavours to convince others, and to assure them of the danger of their condition, if they continued impenitent, and how graciously God had dealt with him.

His great sense of his obligations to those excellent men, the Right Reverend my Lord Bishop of Oxford, and Dr. Marshall, for their charitable and frequent visits to him, and prayers with him; and Dr. Burnet, who came on purpose from London to see him, who were all very serviceable to his repentance.

His extraordinary duty and reverence to his mother, with all the grateful respects to her imaginable, and kindness to his good lady beyond expression, (which may well enhance such a loss to them,) and to his children, obliging them, with all the endearments that a good husband or a tender father could bestow.

To conclude these remarks, I shall only read to you his dying remonstrance, sufficiently attested and signed by his own hand, as his truest sense, (which I hope may be useful for that good end he designed it,) in manner and form following:—

"For the benefit of all those whom I may have drawn into sin by my example and encouragement, I leave to the world this my last declaration, which I deliver in the presence of the great God, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be judged.

"That, from the bottom of my soul, I detest and

abhor the whole course of my former wicked life; that I think I can never sufficiently admire the goodness of God, who has given me a true sense of my pernicious opinions and vile practices, by which I have hitherto lived without hope and without God in the world; have been an open enemy to Jesus Christ, doing the utmost despite to the Holy Spirit of Grace. And that the greatest testimony of my charity to such is, to warn them, in the name of God, and, as they regard the welfare of their immortal souls, no more to deny his being, or his providence, or despise his goodness; no more to make a mock of sin, or contemn the pure and excellent religion of my ever-blessed Redeemer, through whose merits alone I, one of the greatest sinners, do yet hope for mercy and forgiveness. Amen.

"J. ROCHESTER."

Declared and signed in the presence of

ANNE ROCHESTER;
ROBERT PARSONS } June 19, 1680.

And now I cannot but mention, with joy and admiration, that steady temper of mind which he enjoyed through the whole course of his sickness and repentance; which must proceed not from a hurry and perturbation of mind or body arising from the fear of death or dread of hell only, but from an ingenuous love to God, and an uniform regard to virtue, (suitable to that solemn declaration of his, "I would not commit the least sin to gain a kingdom,") with all possible symptoms of a lasting perseverance in it,

if God should have restored him. To which may be added, his comfortable persuasions of God's accepting him to his mercy, saying, three or four days before his death, "I shall die; but, oh! what unspeakable glories do I see! what joys, beyond thought or expression, am I sensible of! I am assured of God's mercy to me through Jesus Christ. Oh! how I long to die, and be with my Saviour!"

The time of his sickness and repentance was just nine weeks; in all which time he was so much master of his reason, and had so clear an understanding, (saving thirty hours, about the middle of it, in which he was delirious,) that he had never dictated or spoke more composed in his life; and, therefore, if any shall continue to say his piety was the effect of madness or vapours, let me tell them, it is highly disingenuous, and that the assertion is as silly as it is wicked. And, moreover, that the force of what I have delivered may not be evaded by wicked men, who are resolved to harden their hearts, maugre all convictions, by saying, This was done in a corner; I appeal, for the truth thereof, to all sorts of persons, who, in considerable numbers, visited and attended him, and more particularly to those eminent physicians who were near him, and conversant with him in the whole course of his tedious sickness; and who, if any, are competent judges of a frenzy or delirium.

There are many more excellent things in my absence which have occasionally dropt from his mouth, that will not come within the narrow compass of a

sermon: these, I hope, will sufficiently prove what I produce them for. And if any shall be still unsatisfied here in this hard-hearted generation, it matters not, let them at their cost be unbelievers still, so long as this excellent penitent enjoys the comfort of his repentance. And now, from all these admirable signs, we have great reason to believe comfortably, that his repentance was real, and his end happy; and accordingly imitate the neighbours and cousins of Elizabeth, (Luke i. 58,) who, when they heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her, came and rejoiced with her.

Thus his dear mother should rejoice, that the son of her love and of her fears, as well as of her bowels, is now born again into a better world; adopted by his heavenly Father, and gone before her to take possesion of an eternal inheritance.

II. His truly loving consort should rejoice, that God has been so gracious to them both, as at the same time to give him a sight of his errors in point of practice, and herself (not altogether without his means and endeavours) a sight of her's in point of faith. And truly, considering the great prejudices and dangers of the Roman religion, I think I may aver, that there is joy in heaven, and should be on earth, for her conversion as well as his.

III. His noble and most hopeful issue should rejoice, as their years are capable; not that a dear and loving father has left them, but that, since he must leave them, he has left them the example of a penitent, and not of a sinner; the blessing of a saint,

in recommending them to an all-sufficient Father, and not entailing on them the fatal curse that attends the posterity of the wicked and impenitent.

IV. All good men should rejoice to see the triumphs of the cross in these latter days, and the words of divine wisdom and power. And bad men certainly, whenever they consider it, are most of all concerned to joy and rejoice in it, as a condemned malefactor is to hear that a fellow-criminal has got his pardon, and that he may do so too, if he speedily sue for it.

And this joy of all will still be the greater, if we compare it with the joy there is in heaven in the case of just persons that need no repentance, viz. that needs not such a solemn, extraordinary repentance, or the whole change of heart and mind, as great sinners do: and of this my text pronounces, that there is "greater joy in heaven over one such sinner that truly repenteth, than there is over ninety and nine just persons that need not such repentance." One reason of which we may conceive to be this; that such a penitent's former failings are ordinarily the occasion of a greater and more active piety afterwards; as our convert earnestly wished that God would be pleased to spare him but one year more, that in that he might honour his name proportionably to the dishonour done to God in his whole life past. And we see St. Paul laboured more abundantly than all the apostles in the planting of the church, because he had raged furiously before in the destruction of it; and our Saviour himself tells us, "that, to whom much is forgiven, they will love

much; but to whom little is forgiven, they will love little."

It is certainly the more safe, indeed the only safe way, to be constantly virtuous; and he that is wise indeed, i. e. wise unto salvation, will endeavour to be one of those that need no repentance; I mean, that entire and whole work of beginning anew; but will draw out the same thread through his whole life, and let not the sun go down upon any of his sins: but then the other repentance is more remarkable, and, where it is real, the more effectual, to produce a fervent and a fruitful piety; besides the greater glory to God in the influence of the example. Which may probably be a farther reason of the excessive joy of the angels at the conversion of such a sinner; because they, who are better acquainted with human nature than we, knowing it apt like the Pharisees, to demand a sign from heaven for the reformation of corrupted customs, discern likewise that such desperate spiritual recoveries will seem so many openings of the heavens in the descent of the Holy Dove, visible to the standers by, and accordingly will have the greater influence upon them. And it is this, in the last place, that I am to recommend to all that hear me this day.

And, having thus discharged the office of an historian, in a faithful representation of the repentance and conversion of this great sinner, give me leave now to bespeak you as an ambassador of Christ, and, in his name, earnestly persuade you to be reconciled to him, and to follow this illustrious person, not in

his sins any more, but in his sorrows for them, and his forsaking them. If there be any in this place, or elsewhere, who have been drawn into a complacency or practice of any kind of sin from his example, let those especially be persuaded to break off their sins by repentance, by the same example; that as he has been for the fall, so he may now be for the rising again of many in Israel. God knows there are too many that are wise enough to discern and follow the examples of evil, but to do good from those examples they have no power; like those absurd flatterers we read of, who could imitate Plato in his crookedness, Aristotle in his stammering, and Alexander the Great in the bending of his neck, and the shrillness of his voice; but either could not, or would not, imitate them in any of their perfections. Such as these I would beseech, in their cooler seasons, to ask themselves that question, "What fruit had you in those things whereof you are now ashamed, for the end of these things is death?" And if any encourage themselves in their wickedness from this example, resolving however to enjoy the good things that are present, to fill themselves with costly wines, and to let no art of pleasure pass by them untasted, supposing with the Gospel rich man, that when one comes to them from the dead, when sickness or old age approaches, that then they will repent; let such as these consider the dreadful hazard they run by such pernicious counsels. It may be (and it is but just with God it should be) that whilst they are making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, and are saying to their souls,

" Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, therefore take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry;" perhaps just then, at the same time the hand of God may be writing upon the walls of their habitations that fatal sentence, " Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall all those things be which thou hast provided?" And what sad reflections must such a one needs make upon his own folly, when he sees all that mirth and ease, which he has promised himself for so many years, must be at an end in a very few hours! And not only so, but that mirth turned into howlings, and that ease into a bed of flames; when the soul must be torn away on a sudden from the things it loved, and go where it will hate to live, and yet cannot die And were it not better for us to embrace cordially the things which belong to our everlasting peace, before they are hid from our eyes? Were it not better for us all to be wise betimes, by preventing such a danger, than to open our eyes, as the unhappy rich man did, when we are in a place of torment?— Be persuaded, then, with humble, penitent and obedient hearts, to meet the blessed Jesus, who is now on the way, and comes to us in the person and in the bowels of a Saviour, wooing us to accept those easy conditions of pardon and peace offered in his holy Gospel, rather than to stay till he become our adversary, and our judge too, when he will deliver us over to the tormentors, till we have paid the utmost farthing, i. e. to all eternity; when those, who have made a mock at sin all their lives, and laughed at the pre-

tended cheats of religion and its priests, shall find themselves at last the greatest fools, and the most sadly cheated in the world: for God will then "laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh, when it cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind." And since they would not suffer his mercy to rejoice over his justice, nor cause any joy in heaven, as the text mentions, in their conversion, his justice will certainly rejoice over his mercy, and cause joy in heaven, as it did at the fall of Babylon, which would not be cured, (Rev. xix. 1,) in their confusion. And, oh! that there was such a heart in them, that they would consider this betimes! that in the midst of their carnal jollities, they would but vouchsafe one regard what may happen hereafter, and what will certainly be the end of these things! For, however the fruits of sin may seem pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one seem wise and witty to the world, yet, alas! they are but empty and unsatisfactory at present, and leave a mortal sting behind them, and bitterness in the latter end; like the book St. John ate, (Rev. x. 10,) "which in his mouth was sweet as honey, but, as soon as he had ate it, his belly was bitter." And that God should please at last to bring men back in their old age from their sinful courses, by a way of weeping, to pluck them as firebrands out of everlasting burnings; yet if men consider how rare and difficult a thing it is to be born again when one is old; how many pangs and violences to nature there must needs be to put off the habits and inclinations to old sins,

as difficult (saith the prophet) as for the leopard to change his spots, or the Æthiopian his skin; and then, when that is done, what scars and weaknesses even a cure must leave behind; I say, he that duly considers this, will think it better to secure his salvation, and all his present true comforts, by preserving his innocency, or alleviating his work by a daily repentance for lesser failings, than to venture upon one single chance of a death-bed repentance; which is no more to be depended upon, for the performance or acceptance, than it can encourage any man not to labour, because Elijah was fed by ravens, or the Israelites with manna from heaven.

If, then, there be any (though, alas! that need not be asked) that have made the greatness of their wit, or birth, or fortune, instruments of iniquity to iniquity, let them now convert them to that original noble use for which God intended them, viz. to be instruments of righteousness unto holiness.

To these especially that are thus great, not only God, but this great person also, by my mouth, being dead, yet speaketh; for as St. Paul seemed more especially concerned for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh; and even the rich man in hell, though sufficiently distracted by his own sufferings, yet seems hugely desirous that one might be sent from the dead to his brethren, that he might testify unto them, lest they also come into that place of torment; so this illustrious convert, after God had opened his eyes to see his follies, was more especially desirous of the salvation of those that were his

brethren, though not in the flesh, yet in the greatness of their quality and of their sins; passionately wishing, that all such were not only almost, but altogether such as he now was, saving his bodily afflictions: and of great force, methinks, should the admonitions of a dying friend be.

Now these especially I would beseech, as the minister of Christ, and such as, though we are reviled, we bless, though we are defamed, we entreat, to suffer the word of exhortation, that they would not terminate their eyes upon the outward pomp and pageantry that attend them, as the vulgar Jews did upon their rites and ceremonies; but (as the wiser Israelites, who esteemed those glittering formalities as the types and images of heavenly things) be quickened by them to the ambition of original honours and future glory. How much were it to be wished, that such persons especially would be followers of God and goodness, since, whether they will or not, other men will be followers of them!

It is true, the temptations of great persons are more and greater than those of inferiors; but then their abilities and understandings are ordinarily greater too; and, if they lie more open to the assaults of the devil, they have generally greater sagacity to foresee the danger, and more powerful assistance to go through it. Nor is piety inconsistent with greatness any more than it is with policy, but is the best foundation and security both to the one and the other. The breeding of Moses at court without doubt contributed much even to his religious

performances, at least so far as to make them more useful and exemplary to others: but then he was sincerely virtuous all the while, as well whilst reputed the son of Pharaoh's daughter, as when Jethro's son-in-law.

We find Christians in Cæsar's household as soon as any where else in Rome; and, when Christianity had once gained Constantine, it spread itself farther over the empire in a few years than before it had done in some centuries. Since, then, so much good or mischief depends upon illustrious examples, will it not better become men to draw the multitude after them to heaven by their piety, than by infectious guilts be at the head of a miserable company of the damned?

'Tis this piety, a timely and exemplary piety, that will perpetuate, to men of birth and fortunes, their honours, and their estates too, as well by deriving on them the blessing of God, who is the true fountain of honour, as by creating an awe and reverence for them from all orders of men, even to many generations; a reverence which will be fresh and lasting, when all the trophies of wit and gaiety are laid in the dust. 'Tis this piety that will be the guide of their youth, and the comfort of their age; for "length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." 'Tis this, and this only, that can make all outward blessings comfortable, indeed blessings to us, by making them the steps and means of attaining the never-fading honours and incomprehensible glories of that kingdom which is above;

where there shall be no sin, nor sickness, nor pain, nor tears, nor death, but we shall rest from all our labours, and our works shall follow us.

Unto which God of his infinite mercy bring us, for the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour: to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, let us ascribe all praise and adoration, now and for ever! Amen!

THE celebrated Dr. Johnson, in his Lives of the English Poets, gave the following reason for adding the Poem of Passerat to the account of Lord Rochester:—"His works are not common, and therefore I shall subjoin his verses;"—and also said, that "the strongest effort of that Nobleman's Muse was the Poem upon Nothing;" which the Publishers hope will be admitted as a sufficient excuse for annexing both the Poems to this Work.

NIHIL:

POEMA CLARISSIMI VIRI JOANNIS PASSERATII, REGII IN ACADEMIA PARISIENSI PROFESSORIS; AD ORNATISSIMUM VIRUM ERRICUM MEMMIUM.

JANUS adest festæ poscunt sua dona kalendæ,
Munus abest festis quod possim offerre kalendis.
Siccine Castalius nobis exaruit humor?

Usque adeò ingenii nostri est exhausta facultas,
Immunem ut videat redeuntis janitor anni?
Quod nusquam est, potius nova per vestigia quæram.
Ecce autem partes dum sese versat in omnes
Invenit mea Musa NIHIL, ne despice munus.
Nam NIHIL est gemmis, NIHIL est pretiosius auro.
Huc animum, huc igitur vultus adverte benignos;
Res nova narratur quæ nulli audita priorum,
Ausonii et Graii dixerunt cætera vates,
Ausoniæ indictum NIHIL est Græcæque Camœnæ.
E cœlo quacunque Ceres sua prospicit arva,
Aut genitor liquidis orbem complectitur ulnis
Oceanus, NIHIL interitus et originis expers.
Immortale NIHIL, NIHIL omni parte beatum.
Quòd si hinc majestas et vis divina probatur,
Num quid honore deûm, num quid dignabimur ac
Conspectu lucis NIHIL est jucundius almæ,
Vere NIHIL, NIHIL irriguo formosius horto,
Floridius pratis, Zephyri clementius aura;
In bello sanctum NIHIL est, Martisque tumultu:
Justum in pace NIHIL, NIHIL est in fœdere tutum.
Felix cui NIHIL est (fuerant hæc vota Tibullo),
Non timet insidias; fures, incendia temnit:
Sollicitas sequitur nullo sub judice lites.
Ille ipse invictis qui subjicit omnia fatis
Zenonis sapiens, NIHIL admiratur et optat.
Socraticique gregis fuit ista scientia quondam,
Scire NIHIL, studio cui nunc incumbitur uni.
Nec quicquam in ludo mavult didicisse juventus,
Ad magnas quia ducit opes, et culmen honorum.
Nosce NIHIL, nosces fertur quod Pythagoreæ
Grano hærere fabæ, cui vox adjuncta negantis.

Multi Mercurio freti duce viscera terræ
Pura liquefaciunt simul, et patrimonia miscent,
Arcano instantes operi, et carbonibus atris,
Qui tandem exhausti damnis, fractique labore,
Inveniunt atque inventum NIHIL usque requirunt.
Hoc dimetiri non ulla decempeda possit:
Nec numeret Libycæ numerum qui callet arenæ:
Et Phœbo ignotum NIHIL est, NIHIL altius astris.
Tuque, tibi licet eximium sit mentis acumen,
Omnem in naturam penetrans, et in abdita rerum,
Pace tua, Memmi, NIHIL ignorare videris.
Sole tamen NIHIL est, et puro clarius igne.
Tange NIHIL, dicesque NIHIL sine corpore tangi.
Cerne NIHIL, cerni dices NIHIL absque colore.
Surdum audit loquiturque NIHIL sine voce, volatque
Absque ope pennarum, et graditur sine cruribus ullis.
Absque loco motuque NIHIL per inane vagatur.
Humano generi utilius NIHIL arte medendi.
Ne rhombos igitur, neu Thessala murmura tent...
Idalia vacuum trajectus arundine pectus,
Neu legat Idæo Dictæum in vertice gramen.
Vulneribus sævi NIHIL auxiliatur amoris.
Vexerit et quemvis trans mœstas portitor undas,
Ad superos imo NIHIL hunc revocabit ab oreo.
Inferni NIHIL inflectit præcordia regis,
Parcarumque colos, et inexorabile pensum.
Obruta Phlegræis campis Titania pubes
Fulmineo sensit NIHIL esse potentius ictu:
Porrigitur magni NIHIL extra mœnia mundi:
Diique NIHIL metuunt. Quid longo carmine plura
Commemorem? Virtute NIHIL præstantius ipsa,

Splendidius NIHIL est; NIHIL est Jove denique majus.
Sed tempus finem argutis imponere nugis;
Ne tibi si multa laudem mea carmina charta,
Ne NIHILO NIHILI pariant fastidia versus.

UPON NOTHING.

NOTHING! thou elder brother e'en to Shade,
That hadst a being e'er the word was made,
And (well fixt) art, alone, of ending not afraid.

Ere time and place were, time and place were not,
When primitive NOTHING something straight begot,
Then all proceeded from the great united—What?

Something, the general attribute of all,
Sever'd from thee, its sole original,
Into thy boundless self must undistinguish'd fall.

Yet Something did thy mighty pow'r command,
And from thy fruitful Emptiness's hand
Snatch'd men, beasts, birds, fire, air, and land.

Matter, the wicked'st offspring of thy race,
By Form assisted, flew from thy embrace;
And rebel Light obscured thy rev'rend dusky face.

With Form and Matter, Time and Place did join;
Body, thy foe, with thee did leagues combine,
To spoil thy peaceful realm, and ruin all thy line.

But turncoat Time assists the foe in vain,
And, brib'd by thee, assists thy short-liv'd reign,
And to thy hungry womb drives back thy slaves again.

Tho' mysteries are barr'd from laic eyes,
And the Divine alone, with warrant, pries
Into thy bosom, where the truth in private lies;

Yet this of thee the wise may freely say——
Thou from the virtuous nothing tak'st away,
And to be part with thee the wicked wisely pray.

Great Negative, how vainly would the wise
Inquire, define, distinguish, teach, devise,
Didst thou not stand to point their dull philosophies!

Is, or *is not*, the two great ends of fate,
And, true or false, the subject of debate,
That perfect or destroy the vast designs of fate.

When they have rack'd the *politician's* breast,
Within thy bosom most securely rest;
And, when reduc'd to thee, are least unsafe and best.

But, NOTHING, why does SOMETHING still permit,
That sacred monarchs should at council sit
With persons highly thought at best for nothing fit;

Whilst weighty SOMETHING modestly abstains
From princes' coffers, and from statesmen's brains,
And nothing there like stately NOTHING reigns?

NOTHING, who dwell'st with fools in grave disguise,
For whom they rev'rend shapes and forms devise,
Lawn sleeves, and furs, and gowns, when they like thee look wise;

French truth, *Dutch* prowess, *British* policy,
Hibernian learning, *Scotch* civility,
Spaniards' despatch, *Danes'* wit, are mainly seen in thee.

The great man's gratitude to his best friend,
Kings' promises, w——s' vows, tow'rds thee they bend,
Flow swiftly into thee, and in thee ever end.

THE END.

G. SMALLFIELD, Printer, Hackney.

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